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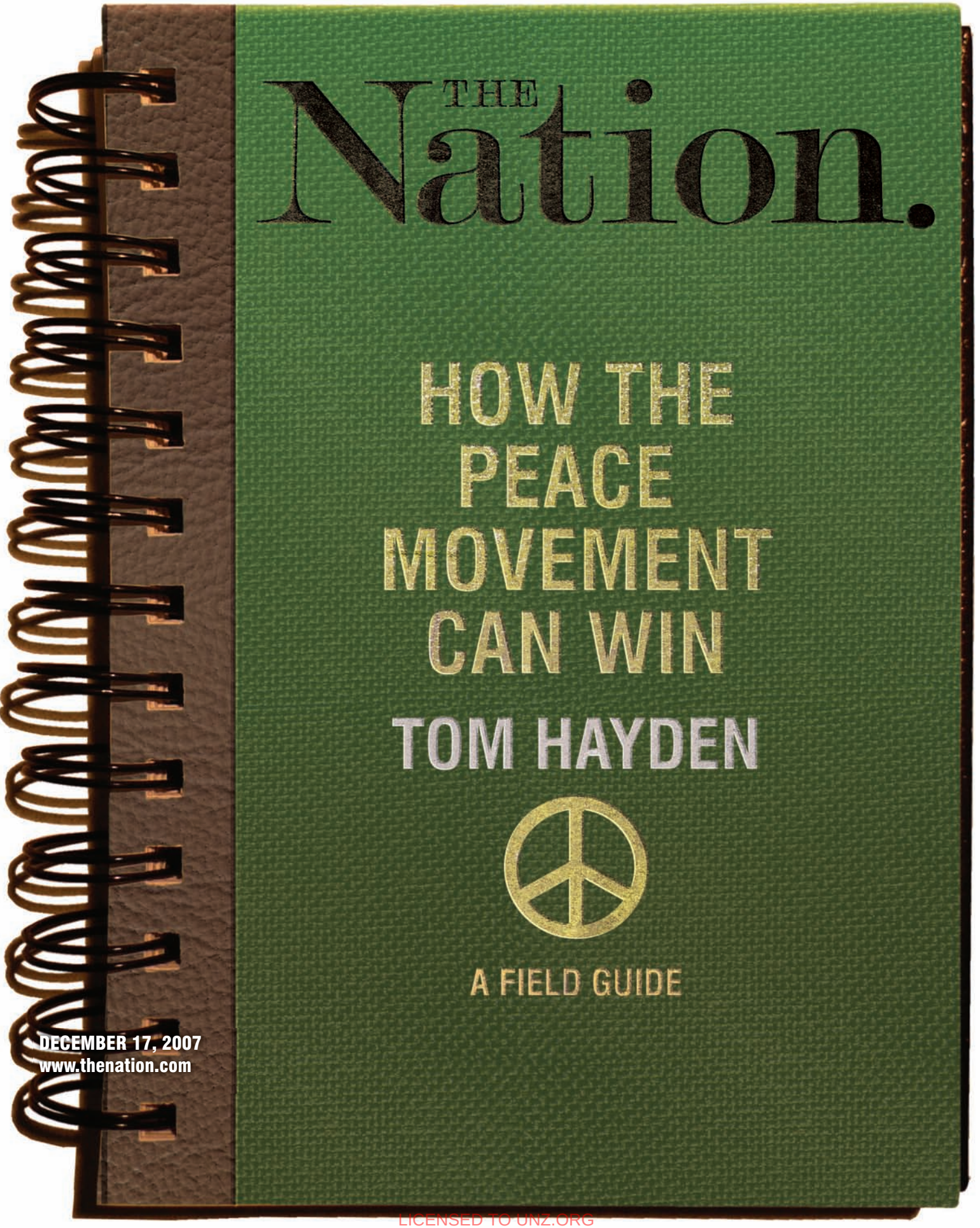

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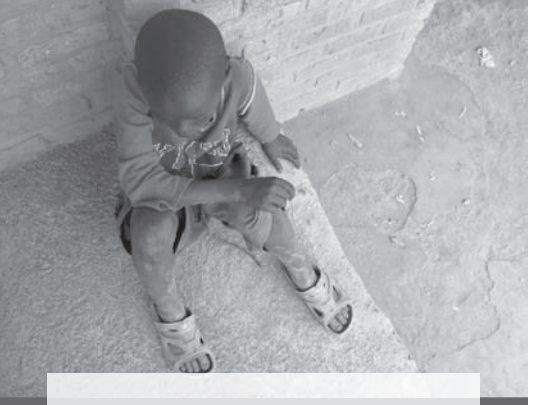

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Evidence-Based Approaches

edited by Chris Beyrer, M.D., M.P.H., and H. F. Pizer

"This book is a real contribution for those working to bring health and dignity to communities in need. We have long understood that the violation of the human rights of the poor and marginalized had grave implications for their health and well-being. Now we have a tool kit for investigating those relationships and, more importantly, for doing something about them to improve both human health and human rights."
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Life, Liberty, and the Small-Bore Engine

Paul R. Josephson

The first comprehensive history of the small-bore engine and the technology it powers—from dirt bikes and jet skis to weed wackers and snowblowers—explores the political, environmental, and public health issues surrounding one of America's most dangerous pastimes. Josephson's compelling history leads to one irrefutable conclusion: these machines cannot be operated without loss of life and loss of habitat.

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Exchange

Amen to All That

"The New Atheists," Ronald Aronson's cover story for the June 25 issue, drew so much mail, of such variety, we have only now been able to digest it all. Here are some of the highlights. —*The Editors*

Washington, Ind.
The writings of Harris, Dawkins, Dennett and Hitchens against God and religion are nothing new. But as a Roman Catholic priest, I agree with them about one thing: the in-your-face religion practiced by some is equally repellent.
Rev. James A. Summitt

Mattoon, Ill.
I object to the term "new atheists." Originally, the only ones who used the term were religious conservatives who wished to portray atheism as akin to a trendy fad likely to pass away on its own that should be ignored. I also object on the grounds that it's simply not true—the "new atheists" who are writing these books have been atheists for many decades. There's nothing new about it.
Matthew Casner

Washington, D.C.
Ronald Aronson makes an important suggestion: nontheists who believe in separation of church and state can work with like-minded theists. That is exactly what is happening on Capitol Hill. The first Congressional lobbying organization representing the interests of the tens of millions of nontheists, the Secular Coalition for America, works with religious church-state-separation groups. We have implemented Aronson's idea that such a group ought to "reorient American thinking about atheists and atheism." The SCA has also made great strides in informing the public that we, too, are patriotic, ethical and, yes, moral.
Lori Lipman Brown
Director, Secular Coalition for America

Silver Spring, Md.
We need to differentiate between strident "atheist fundamentalists," who attack all religion, and humanists, who see religion as varied and are eager to work with moderate and progressive Catholics, Protestants, Jews and others with whom they share many values and concerns, such as saving our nation and our planet from the myriad threats facing us.
Edd Doerr

Buffalo, N.Y.
You don't have to be an atheist or agnostic to feel marginalized by the overwhelming Christian focus of American culture. Aronson's final paragraph, where he recognized the need for education about religion and secularism ("the touchiest question of all"), struck me most deeply. If every high school student were required to take such a course, it would go a long way toward awakening tolerance.
Amy Melton

Carrboro, N.C.
The ideas of the new atheists are a rehash of the Enlightenment critique, about 200 years late. The whole notion of "religion" smacks of a particular moment of Eurocentric thought—look at how badly Buddhism fits into that container. The sociological critique that belief systems invest ties between people with meaning and thus make social life possible is lost on these authors, as is the postcolonial notion that science and rationality can be a colonial imposition.

Yes, fundamentalist clinging to the literal reality of myths must be dispelled (although I'd throw both Marxism and the selfish gene in there as well), but it is difficult to take seriously people who discuss the present manifestations of religion without considering some of the global political and economic changes of the past thirty years. The goal has to be to develop communities that are going to struggle to change the world, and some of the cosmologies labeled as "religion" are likely to prove useful in that context. We need a complex strategy of sacralizing what is important (equitable ties between people, a new relationship with the nonhuman world) while being tolerant of what is

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(continued on page 26)

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Battle of the Surge

Any decline in violence in Iraq is welcome. But the relative quiet that reigns in Baghdad does not mean that the troop surge has been successful. This elementary point—which even some antiwar Democrats hesitate to make—now routinely elicits accusations of "defeatism" and worse from Republicans and their water carriers in the media. Yet it is the war party's triumphalism that deserves to be met with outrage. Did they think no one would notice that they have rewritten the script? The surge was supposed to improve security as a means to an end; the end was to find a political solution for Iraq's internal conflicts. In President Bush's own words, "Victory in Iraq will bring something new in the Arab world—a functioning democracy that polices its territory, upholds the rule of law, respects fundamental human liberties and answers to its people." Does that sound like today's Iraq? The country is no closer to having a workable government or to reconciliation among hostile parties than it was when the surge began. A poll released in September showed 70 percent of Iraqis saying the surge has "hampered conditions for political dialogue, reconstruction and economic development," and no political advances have followed the ebb in violence since then. One of the surge's tactics was to empower local militias, and as a consequence Iraqis may feel safer in their neighborhoods but they are further from having a central government with the ability to maintain law and order. The Shiite-led government, for its part, seems no more inclined to compromise on key issues than it was eight months ago.

EDITORIAL

The vaunted decline in violence must also be put in perspective. There are still more than 575 attacks a week, well more than 2,000 a month. The number of attacks has declined only to early 2006 levels, one of the deadliest years of the war. Moreover, the drop cannot necessarily be attributed to the US military presence. As American officials on the ground have admitted, the move by Sunni groups to rein in Al Qaeda has made a huge difference. So has the decision by Muqtada al-Sadr to order his militia to stand down. Iran is also said to have used its influence to curb the violence by certain Shiite militias. They all had their reasons, unrelated to the American strategy, for trying to quell the violence.

There is also an ugly flip side to the recent calm, which is that the surge was preceded and accompanied by a surge in sectarian cleansing. Thus any drop-off in violence reflects the fact that much of the ethnic cleansing that was part of that violence has already taken place—entire neighborhoods in Baghdad, for example, have been emptied of their Sunni residents. In this sense the worst of the civil war may be over—and it took place on America's watch. Another possible explanation of the lull is that the Iraqi population has been decimated, with hundreds of thousands of war deaths and massive refugee flight, 26,000 detained by US forces and thousands more languishing in Iraqi prisons.

With antiwar sentiment at home widespread but not deep, the outcome of the domestic debate on Iraq depends in large part on the perception of success or failure: public opinion is liable to swing in favor of staying in Iraq if people think the war is going well. This poses a challenge—and opportunity—for the peace movement, which Tom Hayden outlines on page 11. Without question, it is important to counter GOP propaganda about the surge's "success." But to build a stronger opposition movement, the emphasis must remain on what is fundamentally wrong—not just what is going wrong now—with the war and occupation.

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Bernie Sanders: Global Warming Is Reversible

John Nichols: The GOP Debate

Katrina vanden Heuvel: Putin and the Press

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NATION POLL

Will anything useful come from the Mideast Peace Conference in Annapolis?

TAKE ACTION

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Free teaching guide

Spectacle at Annapolis

COMMENT

The air of pessimism preceding the international peace conference at Annapolis was so heavy and the predictions of failure so widespread, it's a wonder the meeting occurred at all. The Israelis and Palestinians were unable to prepare a joint statement for the talks until the last minute, while the Americans were so chastened by delays and outside ridicule that the White House began to insist that the conclave should not be called a "summit," indeed not even a "conference," but merely a "meeting."

The impediments to success—which will be defined not by what happened at Annapolis but by negotiations scheduled to begin soon after—are multiple and daunting. Chief among them is that the three key leaders—Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and US President George W. Bush—have so far been either unable or unwilling to take the courageous steps needed to ensure a lasting agreement. Olmert, still enduring low approval ratings after the Lebanon war fiasco of 2006, is under criminal investigation arising from corruption scandals and is hamstrung by far-right members of his Cabinet determined to foil even minuscule steps toward peace. Abbas not only lost control of Gaza in June after the mini-coup by Hamas; his dysfunctional Fatah government controls little outside Ramallah in the West Bank. And lame-duck Bush, given the Iraq occupation and the clear hypocrisy of his call for democracy in the Middle East—quickly downplayed after the 2006 Palestinian elections brought Hamas to power—is not only unpopular at home but more despised in the Middle East than any leader in US history. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who organized the Annapolis meeting and whose reputation is riding on the results, began to rival Bush in disrepute after her notorious refusal to call for a cease-fire in the Lebanon war.

So why take such a gamble now, given its seeming certainty of failure? From the perspective of the Bush Administration as well as many of the attendees, the purpose is not only to address the Israel-Palestine conflict but to use diplomacy to isolate Iran and radical Sunni Islamists. The Administration encouraged Arab League attendance at Annapolis as a way to forge a regional alliance against the Persian Peril (and also to recoup some of the political capital lost through the Iraq disaster). The White House and Israel also hope that heightened aid to the West Bank PA, releases of Fatah prisoners and progress in talks stemming from Annapolis can be used to turn Palestinians against Hamas. This has been combined with a near-blockade of Gaza—the collective punishment of 1.4 million Palestinians for democratically electing leaders not to Washington's liking, which has led to staggering levels of poverty and hunger and a growing public health crisis. Aside from these violations of human rights, the Administration seems to have given little thought to the fact that an agreement with one Palestinian faction will invite sabotage from the excluded. One does not have to accept Hamas's ideology, or that of the clerical regime in Tehran, to recognize that engagement and negotiation are more productive than isolation.

As if all of these factors were not enough to doom the Annapolis démarche, the odd structure of the follow-up talks

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Noted.

AUSSIE RULES: George W. Bush took an electoral beating November 24, but not at any ballot box in this hemisphere. Bush's pounding was administered in Australia, where his closest international ally, Prime Minister **John Howard**, suffered a stinging rebuke. Not only did Howard's Liberal Party lose control of the upper and lower chambers of the Australian Parliament but the prime minister failed to retain the parliamentary seat he's held since 1974. That's a big loss for the White House, because no global leader so slavishly parroted Bush as did Howard. The Bush Administration did everything it could—short of invasion—to influence the voting there. The President traveled to Australia to hail Howard's commitment to the neoconservative agenda, especially the dispatch of Australian troops to Iraq and the support of US moves to help India develop its nuclear capacity. When Howard faced domestic pressure over the detention of Australian citizens at Guantánamo, **Dick Cheney** arranged for their release.

But it wasn't enough. The opposition Labour Party prevailed, placing mildly socialist technocrat **Kevin Rudd** in the prime ministership. Rudd's pledge to bring Australian troops home from Iraq—further dismantling the "coalition of the willing," which had already been diminished by electoral revolts in Spain, Italy and other countries—grabbed international headlines. But Australia's contribution to the occupation is a modest 550 combat troops. The bigger shift will come on climate change, where Rudd promised to align himself with the agenda of Nobel laureate **Al Gore**. Abandoning the rejectionist line that made Howard the top world leader standing with Bush against the Kyoto Protocol, Rudd and his party's environmental spokesman—former Midnight Oil rocker **Peter Garrett**—promised to sign the agreement as a first order of business. The new prime minister will travel to Bali in early December to help world leaders strengthen the protocol. "The atmosphere at [the] Kyoto talks in Bali will be markedly different due to this election result," explained Greenpeace International political director **Shane Rattenbury**. "The US Administration will no longer be able to plot with the Australians in its effort to destroy international progress against climate change." Greenpeace says Bush is more "isolated" than ever on the global warming front, and the loss of Howard spells a broader isolation. Australians used to call their prime minister "Bush's poodle." Without Howard, the President is left with only White House terrier **Barney**. The lesson Democrats should take from the land down under is that a commitment to fighting climate change is not just another talking point. It's a potent issue that separates the politicians of the past from those of the future. JOHN NICHOLS

18 AND LIFE: According to a recent report by the University of San Francisco School of Law, at least 2,381 US prisoners are serving life sentences without parole for crimes committed when they were younger than 18. The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world (750 prisoners per 100,000 people) and leads—by staggering margins—in the number of juvenile offenders sentenced to die in prison, accounting for 99.9 percent of all such cases worldwide. The study also noted that African-American children are ten times more likely than white children to be sentenced to life without parole.

A. KNOBLER, FRIEND: *The Nation* lost one of its oldest and most cherished friends when **Alfred Knobler** died November 21 at 92. A leader in the American glass industry, Alf was an enthusiastic member of *The Nation*'s first ownership group, assembled by Ham Fish and Victor Navasky in the mid-1970s. With his son Peter, he presided over *Crawdaddy* magazine; and when that sprightly enterprise fell on hard times, he arranged for the then-homeless *Nation* to inherit the lease for the Fifth Avenue premises that would be the magazine's home for two decades. In the '90s he joined the Circle of 100 Partnership, the latest incarnation of the limited partnerships that have sustained *The Nation* off and on since 1977. And in 2003 Alf graced us with a lasting legacy, providing $1 million to The Nation Institute to endow the **Knobler Fellowship**, which is awarded annually to an outstanding minority journalist. Alfred Knobler was a generous ally, a sharp and iconoclastic observer of the American scene and a fixture at *Nation* seminars and public events. We mourn his passing and extend our sympathies to his family.

OUR MAN IN IOWA: While *The Nation* did not break the news that the Clinton campaign had planted a question at an Iowa event, subsequently hyped as Plantgate or Questiongate, we'd like to think we played a small role not in its sensationalism but in its sturdier journalistic roots. The story was first reported by former Nation Institute intern **Patrick Caldwell**. Reflecting on the brouhaha, he writes, "On November 6, **Hillary Clinton** appeared at a biodiesel plant in Newton, Iowa, part of a weeklong blitz on her new energy plan. The small venue was packed with locals and a sizable press contingent. I was covering the event for the Grinnell College paper, *Scarlet and Black*. I had planned to write about the senator's uninspired entrance music—the Police's 'Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic'—but I unexpectedly ran into a classmate, **Muriel Gallo-Chasanoff**, who said the Clinton people had approached her looking for a college student to ask a specific question about global warming.

"As soon as my story was published online, major media outlets began calling me for confirmation, and before long CNN, the AP and countless blogs swarmed. Clinton's rivals, looking for openings, insisted they would never plant a question at a public event. Clinton had been criticized for her debate performance at the end of October, and during the following weeks her campaign hit a few bumps. My story became one more bit of ammunition fired at the front-runner, a little gust in the swirling tornado of allegation that defines the way we elect our Presidents. The voracious campaign press, competing daily for new material, whips small stories like mine into twenty-four-hour firestorms. A week later, the details fade into obscurity, replaced by some new blowup, all of them distractions for voters trying to understand the issues and decide for themselves who our next President should be."

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doesn't inspire confidence. The parties are committed to negotiating the most difficult aspects of the conflict, "including all core issues without exception," while at the same time resurrecting the first stage of the stillborn 2003 "road map." Given the makeup of the Israeli government, it's no more likely to carry out those obligations (including a freeze in settlement growth and removal of unauthorized outposts) now than it was four years ago. And the Bush Administration has already made it clear that it has no intention of being an honest broker. The Jewish and Christian Zionist lobby battalions, along with their Congressional cheering section, have been besieging the White House to make sure it doesn't challenge the Israeli position.

Which is a pity, since, despite the myriad obstacles, the path to a two-state solution has never been clearer. As spelled out in documents like the Arab League peace initiative and the 2003 Geneva Accord, Israel would have to pay the difficult price of removing several hundred thousand settlers from the West Bank and the Golan and giving up control of East Jerusalem, but in exchange it would get full diplomatic recognition from not only the new state of Palestine but all the Arab League nations, as well as an end to Syrian motives to foment Hezbollah militancy on Israel's northern border. The Palestinians would have to pay the difficult price of giving up the right of all refugees to return to Israel, but they would get independent statehood and an end to occupation—a solution Hamas would be compelled to accept.

At least one good thing can be said about the Annapolis meeting: it stipulates continuing, frequent high-level talks between the parties. That's certainly an improvement on the diplomatic desert of the past seven years. If the Bush Administration were a true friend to Israel, it would buck the domestic lobbies and pressure Tel Aviv to do what is in US, Israeli and Palestinian interests by ending the occupation. It could even throw in generous security guarantees to Israel to sweeten the offer. The alternative is many more years of conflict, increasing radicalization of not only Palestinians but the entire Arab and Muslim world, and the probable end of the two-state solution. Ehud Olmert himself referred to apartheid South Africa in warning what that would mean: one state, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean, with roughly equal numbers of Palestinians and Jews—a greater threat to Zionism than anything Israel has ever experienced.

ROANE CAREY

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Bare-Bones Huckabee Creeps Up on Free-Spending Romney in Iowa, While Humming 'O Tannenbaum'

Mike Huckabee, Mike Huckabee,
Your numbers just keep soaring.
Mike Huckabee, Mike Huckabee,
It's Romney you are goring,
Though Mitt is rich and Mitt is slick.
He's wondering, "Who is this hick?"
Mike Huckabee, Mitt fails to see
That rich and slick is boring.

Citi's Mexican Cronies

COMMENT

With estimates of the losses from the subprime mortgage fiasco spiraling past $100 billion, Citigroup, Bank of America and similar citadels of financial genius are deep in a huddle with the Treasury over some sort of rescue operation. Pundits are shocked at the prospect of taxpayers bailing out companies whose middle managers are distraught if their year-end bonuses come to less than seven figures. After all, deregulation and global competition was supposed to banish the cozy relationship between big business and big government that justifies corporate welfare under the slogan "Too Big to Fail."

But a look just south of the border—where Citigroup has also been making headlines—reminds us that crony capitalism is not some anomaly that rears its hypocritical head in times of financial crisis. It is built into the DNA of multinational banking.

On October 17 the Mexican government announced that a syndicate organized by Banamex, Citigroup's Mexican subsidiary, had bid for and won at auction Aeroméxico, the country's largest airline. Having bailed out Aeroméxico's former owners eighteen years ago, the government owned a majority of the company's stock, which it was now privatizing.

The news was accompanied by photo-ops of smiling bureaucrats shaking hands with happy plutocrats from the Citigroup/Banamex syndicate. Frontman for the syndicate is José Luis Barraza, a major fundraiser for Mexican President Felipe Calderón. Barraza financed the vicious campaign attack ads against leftist candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador, which were a major factor in Calderón's narrow and possibly fraudulent victory last year. A Mexican court later acknowledged that the ads were illegal but with a straight face declared that they didn't affect the outcome of the election—won by 0.5 percent of the vote.

Shortly after the announcement of the Aeroméxico sale, it leaked out that Citigroup/Banamex had not been the highest bidder. Less than three minutes after its bid, the government was offered a higher price by a group headed by a businessman to whom the Mexican president did not owe any favors. The Calderonistas disqualified the higher bid on the grounds that it had come too late, i.e., after a deadline that Citigroup/Banamex had insisted the government impose. The decision violated the law, which forbids arbitrary closing of a privatization auction under such circumstances. When the losing bidder was asked if he was going to sue, he declined. He had plenty of evidence the deal was rigged, he said, but the fix was in, and there was no way he could beat the Citigroup-government alliance in a Mexican court.

As one Mexican newspaper put it, Citigroup/Banamex got control of an entire airline for practically the price of one new advanced-design airplane. Moreover, at least part of the money

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Citigroup/Banamex is paying the Mexican government for Aeroméxico comes from huge subsidies the bank is already receiving from—you guessed it—the Mexican government.

In 1982, when the peso crashed, the government bought Banamex as a way of rescuing the bank and its Mexican owners from bankruptcy. In 1991 Mexican President Carlos Salinas resold it for $4.6 billion to a business group headed by a close ally, Roberto Hernández. Two years later Salinas signed the North American Free Trade Agreement, which included a timetable for dismantling Mexico's law against foreign ownership of its commercial banks. The foremost champion of NAFTA in the Clinton White House was economic adviser Robert Rubin, formerly co-chair of Goldman Sachs. When another peso crisis hit Mexico in 1994, Rubin, then US Treasury Secretary, financed a bailout of the Wall Street holders of Mexican bonds. As part of the complex deal, Salinas's successor, Ernesto Zedillo, agreed to accelerate the opening up of Mexican banks to foreigners.

At the same time, Zedillo rescued the Too Big to Fail Banamex by buying its largely worthless portfolio of uncollectible loans—on credit. Mexican taxpayers are still paying Banamex interest for the government purchase of the bank's junk securities a dozen years ago. The exact amount of the subsidy is buried in obscure government accounting, but a 2004 estimate was that the government still "owed" Banamex roughly $4 billion.

In 2003 the Mexican government subsidy to the banking industry—by then almost totally owned by foreign corporations—was three times what it was spending on roads, school buildings, health facilities and other infrastructure. This, in a country where 42 percent of the people don't earn enough to support a minimum Mexican market basket of food, clothing and other essentials.

In 1999 Rubin resigned as Treasury Secretary to become chair of the executive committee of Citigroup. Two years later, shortly after the date on which Mexico had to open up its banks to foreign ownership, Rubin flew to Mexico to buy Banamex for $12.5 billion plus a seat on the Citigroup board for Hernández. The Mexican press reports that the well-connected Hernández masterminded the Aeroméxico deal, which will provide Citigroup/Banamex with substantial revenues from financing airplane leases and insurance, along with being the preferred banker for the airline's suppliers.

As the icing on this very lucrative cake, the Calderón government decided that the Citigroup/Banamex gang should not have to pay the normal sales tax. Sales taxes, it was explained with a straight face, really fall on the seller, not the buyer (try this out next time you go to the store), and since the seller was the government, there is no point in the government paying the sales tax to itself. Neat. No wonder the Citigroup board just elected Rubin to be its chair.

So here is your global free enterprise system (*a k a* socialism for the rich) at work: Citigroup/Banamex, which is Too Big to Fail in the United States, has also been deemed Too Big to Fail by the Mexican government and is being subsidized by Mexican taxpayers to buy Aeroméxico, also Too Big to Fail.

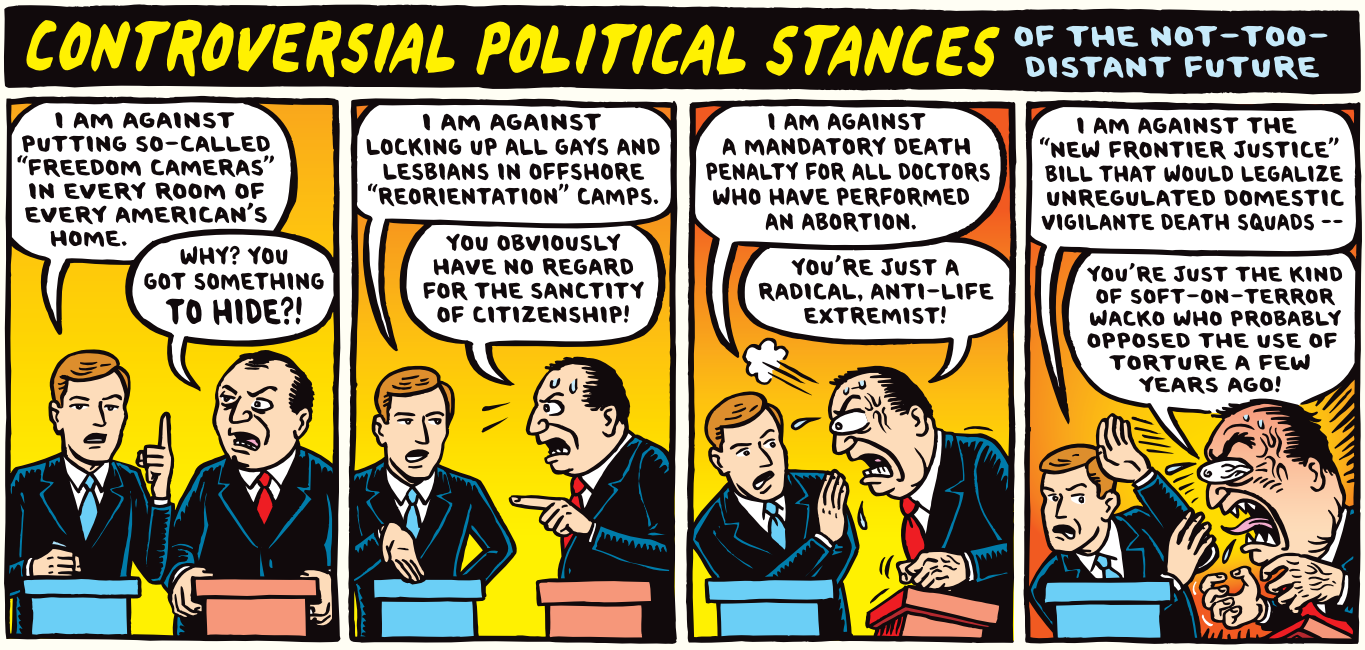
The World Bank, IMF and other neoliberal hangouts are still pushing developing countries to open up their financial markets to multinational banks, precisely on the grounds that it will eliminate crony capitalism. The idea, you see, is that these global wheeler-dealers will bring First World standards of competence to the Third World. And so they have: Banamex, like its Citigroup owner, just posted a massive loss for the last quarter. It seems Banamex has also been pushing subprime loans, via credit cards, to people who don't earn enough to pay them back.

Citigroup, by the way, operates in more than 135 countries. Taxpayers of the world: hold on to your wallets. JEFF FAUX

Jeff Faux was the founder, and is now Distinguished Fellow, of the Economic Policy Institute. His latest book is The Global Class War *(Wiley).*

Comix Nation

by WARD SUTTON


CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL STANCES OF THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT FUTURE
I AM AGAINST PUTTING SO-CALLED "FREEDOM CAMERAS" IN EVERY ROOM OF EVERY AMERICAN'S HOME.
WHY? YOU GOT SOMETHING TO HIDE?!
I AM AGAINST LOCKING UP ALL GAYS AND LESBIANS IN OFFSHORE "REORIENTATION" CAMPS.
YOU OBVIOUSLY HAVE NO REGARD FOR THE SANCTITY OF CITIZENSHIP!
I AM AGAINST A MANDATORY DEATH PENALTY FOR ALL DOCTORS WHO HAVE PERFORMED AN ABORTION.
YOU'RE JUST A RADICAL, ANTI-LIFE EXTREMIST!
I AM AGAINST THE "NEW FRONTIER JUSTICE" BILL THAT WOULD LEGALIZE UNREGULATED DOMESTIC VIGILANTE DEATH SQUADS --
YOU'RE JUST THE KIND OF SOFT-ON-TERROR WACKO WHO PROBABLY OPPOSED THE USE OF TORTURE A FEW YEARS AGO!

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Alexander Cockburn

The Dialectics of Revolution… Uh, Recycling

London

Two years ago some smart leftists here put together an event called the Battle of Ideas, and the mix of provocative themes, well-run panels and competent speakers worked out well. I was invited to speak at a couple of sessions in the third Battle at the end of October and was happy to find its organizers threading a sane course past the rocks on which left-organized confabs usually founder: viz., endless mastication of the obvious, marked disinclination to address any new ideas, overblown preachments to the converted. In fact, on the surface at least, this didn't seem like a particularly "left" affair, which probably explains why that weekend a thousand people were milling around the Royal College of Art, next to the Albert Hall.

Waiting for my first panel ("Digital Commons: Does New Technology Add Up to a New Sphere?" My answer: no), I thought back forty years to what these days would be called a signature '60s event, namely, the Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation, held over two weeks in July 1967 in a magnificent railway repair shed known as the Roundhouse, built in the 1840s in north London. There was nothing circular about those proceedings. It was full-tilt forward to revolution, personal and political.

The Congress was convened by radical psychiatrists led by R.D. Laing and David Cooper. They believed that the violence done to what they saw as those socially victimized persons termed "schizophrenic" or "mad" had common features with America's imperial violence, at that time being unleashed on revolutionary Vietnam. The affair featured big names and big themes: Herbert Marcuse, Paul Sweezy, Paul Goodman, Stokely Carmichael, Gregory Bateson.

The night before his address I cooked dinner for Mr. and Mrs. Marcuse on behalf of the *New Left Review* editorial committee. Marcuse was sharing lodgings with Goodman and denounced the latter's habit of leaving the bathroom door open as he stood in his underwear, brushing his teeth, "flirting his buttocks." Marcuse twitched his behind in parody of the licentious author of *Growing Up Absurd* as, slightly shocked, our group waited to continue with probing questions about the Frankfurt School. "Too much civilization, not enough Eros," Mrs. Marcuse muttered wryly.

Next day Marcuse admonished the large crowd, many of whom had taken up permanent residence in the Roundhouse, "We have been too ashamed, understandably ashamed, to insist on the integral, radical features of a socialist society…. If this qualitative difference today appears as utopian, as idealistic, as metaphysical, this is precisely the form in which these radical features must appear if…socialism is indeed…the leap into the realm of freedom—a total rupture."

What seemed to seize the crowds at the Battle of Ideas forty years later were not grand visionary sweeps, like those of Marcuse—history has sidelined these for the nonce—but deflations of what one may term rhetorical, politically correct "mini-progressivism." One panel I eagerly attended, "Recycling Is a Waste of Time," featured a German, Thomas Deichmann, describing the insane recycling regulations now beleaguering the citizenry of Frankfurt. The case for efficient incineration, he asserted, was overwhelming. Most recycling is an utter waste of time, economically unsound and without benefit for the environment. "We should," he counseled urbanely, "be thinking of more interesting things."

Julia Hailes, "sustainability consultant" to companies such as Marks & Spencer and Shell, author of *The New Green Consumer Guide*, listened tautly, as did Julie Hill, author of *A Zero Waste UK*, who gazed at Deichmann as though he were a lead battery in a baby's bath. Hailes mimed, with as much enthusiasm, albeit less satirically than Marcuse forty years earlier, the pleasures of tossing foil into one kitchen bin, a metal bottle top into another, plastic into a third. Recycling, she chirped, made her feel good.

They didn't carry the crowd. A man described sorting green, clear and brown glass into three bins, only to see them all dumped into the same truck. A woman seized the microphone: "I go to the dump with my kid each week to take the rubbish there. Then he goes to school and they do their first day trip, and where do they go?" She paused for effect. "To the dump!" The crowd roared. Mind you, this wasn't a mob of hee-haw Limbaugh-type reactionaries, deriding all collective social efforts to improve the planet. In this and other sessions, their indignation stemmed from a sense that along the road from the grand visions of '67 to the pious sustainability mantras and globe-survivalist waffle of our own phase, the vision of human liberation expressed by Marcuse had collapsed into variants of resource management and nannyism, with irksome rules and protocols, none of which had anything to do with onslaughts on capitalist ownership and control.

In 1989 I did some interviews on environmentalism and socialism for *Z Magazine* with left economist James O'Connor. Jim described what he'd told a fellow in the newspaper recycling business: "If you set up a recycling project where your outfit helps to create the conditions to organize social relations of production that make sense, that have to do with fraternity, equality, liberty and justice, etc., etc., then I'll recycle my newspapers. Come and tell me when you have done that.

A.C.: What do you do with your old newspapers?

J.O.: Throw them in the trash. What do you do with yours?

A.C.: Throw them in the trash. Back in Ireland with my mother we leave them out for the man from St. Vincent de Paul who takes them away for some charitable purpose, thereby maintaining social relations in the sorry state they are today, imploring the poor to pray for relief from heaven. And, needless to say, the poor people of my hometown are very glad to have St. Vincent de Paul bail them out in their hour of need. ■

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Naomi Klein

Guns Beat Green: The Market Has Spoken

Anyone tired of lousy news from the markets should talk to Douglas Lloyd, director of Venture Business Research, a company that tracks trends in venture capitalism. "I expect investment activity in this sector to remain buoyant," he said recently. His bouncy mood was inspired by the money gushing into private security and defense companies. He added, "I also see this as a more attractive sector, as many do, than clean energy."

Got that? If you are looking for a sure bet in a new growth market, sell solar, buy surveillance; forget wind, buy weapons.

This observation—coming from an executive trusted by such clients as Goldman Sachs and Marsh & McLennan—deserves particular attention in the run-up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali at the beginning of December. There, world environment ministers are supposed to come up with the global pact that will replace Kyoto.

The Bush Administration, still roadblocking firm caps on emissions, wants to let the market solve the crisis. "We're on the threshold of dramatic technological breakthroughs," Bush assured the world last January, adding, "We'll leave it to the market to decide the mix of fuels that most effectively and efficiently meet this goal."

The idea that capitalism can save us from climate catastrophe has powerful appeal. It gives politicians an excuse to subsidize corporations rather than regulate them, and it neatly avoids a discussion about how the core market logic of endless growth landed us here in the first place.

The market, however, appears to have other ideas about how to meet the challenges of an increasingly disaster-prone world. According to Lloyd, despite all the government incentives, the really big money is turning away from clean energy technologies and banking instead on gadgets promising to seal wealthy countries and individuals into high-tech fortresses. Key growth areas in venture capitalism are private security firms selling surveillance gear and privatized emergency response. Put simply, in the world of venture capitalism, there has been a race going on between greens on the one hand and guns and garrisons on the other—and the guns are winning.

According to Venture Business Research, in 2006 North American and European companies developing green technology and those focused on "homeland security" and weaponry were neck and neck in the contest for new investment: green tech received $3.5 billion, and so did the guns and garrisons sector. But this year garrisons have suddenly leapt ahead. The greens have received $4.2 billion, while the garrisons have nearly doubled their money, collecting $6 billion in new investment funds. And 2007 isn't over yet.

This trend has nothing to do with real supply and demand, since the demand for clean energy technology could not be higher. With oil reaching $100 a barrel, it is clear that we badly need green alternatives, both as consumers and as a species. The latest report from the Nobel Prize–winning UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was characterized by *Time* magazine as "a final warning to humanity," while a new Oxfam report makes it clear that the recent wave of natural disasters is no fluke: over the past two decades, the number of extreme weather events has quadrupled. Conversely, 2007 has seen no major terrorist events in North America or Europe, there are hints of a US troop drawdown in Iraq and, despite the relentless propaganda, there is no imminent threat from Iran.

So why is "homeland security," not green energy, the hot new sector? Perhaps because there are two distinct business models that can respond to our climate and energy crisis. We can develop policies and technologies to get us off this disastrous course. Or we can develop policies and technologies to protect us from those we have enraged through resource wars and displaced through climate change, while simultaneously shielding ourselves from the worst of both war and weather. (The ultimate expression of this second option is Hummer's new TV ads: the gas-guzzler is seen carrying its cargo to safety in various disaster zones, followed by the slogan "HOPE: Hummer Owners Prepared for Emergencies." It's a bit like the Marlboro man doing grief counseling in a cancer ward.) In short, we can choose to fix, or we can choose to fortress. Environmental activists and scientists have been yelling for the fix. The homeland security sector, on the other hand, believes the future lies in fortresses.

Though 9/11 launched this new economy, many of the original counterterrorism technologies are being retrofitted as privatized emergency response during natural disasters—Blackwater pitching itself as the new Red Cross, firefighters working for insurance giants (see my last column, "Rapture Rescue 911"). By far the biggest market is the fortressing of Europe and North America—Halliburton's contract to build detention centers for an unspecified immigration influx, Boeing's "virtual" border fence, biometric ID cards. The primary target for these technologies is not terrorists but immigrants, an increasing number of whom have been displaced by extreme weather events like the recent floods in Tabasco, Mexico, or the cyclone in Bangladesh. As climate change creates more landlessness, the market in fortresses will increase dramatically.

Of course, there is still money to be made from going green; but there is much more green—at least in the short term—to be made from selling escape and protection. As Lloyd explains, "The failure rate of security businesses is much lower than clean-tech ones and, as important, the capital investment required to build a successful security business is also much lower." In other words, solving real problems is hard, but turning a profit from those problems is easy.

Bush wants to leave our climate crisis to the ingenuity of the market. Well, the market has spoken: it will not take us off this disastrous course. In fact, the smart money is betting that we will stay on it. ■

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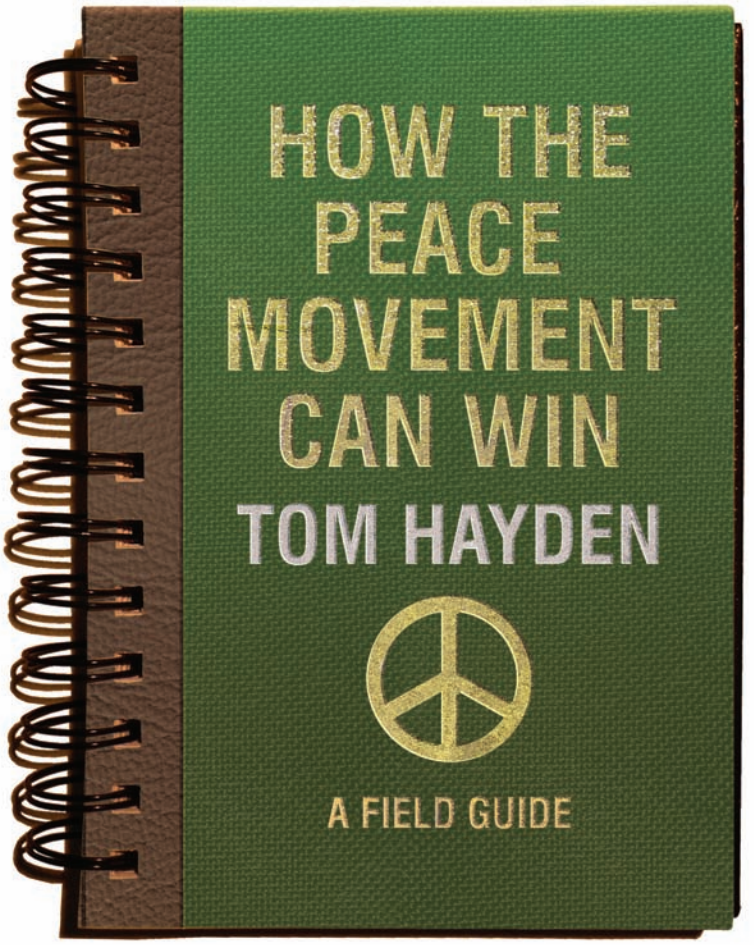

For war opponents, the election year is a moment of great opportunity—and peril. Leveraging antiwar sentiment into a victory for peace, rather than low-profile war, is the challenge.

The Republicans, led by George W. Bush, Rudy Giuliani and their hard-core neoconservative hit squads, have spent millions on television messages supporting the military surge in Iraq. They mounted a major campaign to demonize MoveOn.org in order to derail the group's proven ability to raise funds for antiwar messages and Democratic candidates. During the election year, pro-war Republicans are poised to promote staying the course in Iraq while threatening or even instigating a war on Iran. The Democrats will have to respond with more than an echo.

But at this point the leading Democratic contenders are reluctant to say they would pull out all the troops from a war they claim to oppose. In sharp contrast to Republicans, Democrats at least support withdrawing most or all American *combat* troops on a twelve- to eighteen-month deadline. Asked for exact timelines, however, the top contenders indicate that they would put off the withdrawal of all troops until sometime in their second term. The platform of "out by 2013" may be a sufficient difference from the Republicans for some, but it won't satisfy the most committed antiwar voters. Asked about the five-year estimate, Senator Hillary Clinton's spokesman on Iraq policy, Philippe Reines, expressed surprise, but his formulation of her views did not conflict with the idea of a long US presence: that she wants substantial troop reductions starting immediately, without a deadline for completion, and with a smaller American force left behind dedicated to training Iraqis and counter-terrorism.

"It's beginning to feel like 2004," says one Washington insider at the Center for American Progress, a think tank led by former Clinton Chief of Staff John Podesta. CAP issued a key memo on October 31 complaining about a "strategic drift" setting in among security strategists and the Democratic leaders they advise. The schizophrenia consists of wanting to end the war as painlessly as possible while running away from their anti-Vietnam past. In the triangulating phrase of Barack Obama, one can't be seen as a "Tom Hayden Democrat" on Iraq.

The leading Democratic contenders buy the line of a more hawkish think tank, the Center for a New American Security, a mostly Democratic cast of auditioning future national security advisers. They propose the gradual, multiyear withdrawal of combat troops and an increase in the number of Special Forces and trainers, who are somehow supposed to train the Iraqi army and chase Al Qaeda from Iraq. A similar proposal was made at the beginning of this year by the Iraq Study Group, based on a December 2006 report. The dangerous, even irrational, assumption of this thinking is that a small number of American trainers and Special Forces can accomplish what 160,000 troops have failed to do.

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THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Katrina vanden Heuvel,
Editor & Publisher
of *The Nation*

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PUBLICATION

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Nevertheless, the proposal has understandable appeal. Bush plans to withdraw 25,000 to 30,000 troops this spring to salvage an army at the breaking point. If the next President withdraws another 75,000 troops in 2009, the peace movement will face the challenge of opposing a war that appears to be slowly ending. Iraq would then likely evolve into either an Algerian- or Salvadoran-style dirty war or tumble toward a South Vietnam–style fiasco with American advisers trapped in the cross-fire. But it would be mostly invisible until the endgame if managed successfully, with American casualties declining in a low-profile war.

Can anything be done to avert this scenario? Actually, yes. The peace movement does have an opportunity to solidify public opinion behind a more rapid withdrawal—regardless of what the national security advisers think.

Peace advocates will likely have the best-funded antiwar message in history during the coming election year. Tens of millions of dollars will be raised for voter education and registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns through the 527 committees, which disseminate election messages independent of partisan candidates. The Democrats defaulted on their opportunity to use these independent committees for a peace message in 2004, when they muted and muddled their antiwar position. But this time they will have to contend with the frustration of millions of antiwar voters, and their nominee will be pledged, in rhetoric at least, to end the war.

Backed by real resources, skilled organizers and volunteers across the electoral battlegrounds of 2008 will be able to identify, register and turn out voters through door-to-door work combined with radio and television spots. Already, former MoveOn political director Tom Matzzie is being entrusted with a $100 million fund for independent expenditures during the 2008 electoral cycle, a significant portion of which will go to antiwar messages. The money will come from antiwar unions like the Service Employees International and big-money donors like investor George Soros and Hollywood producer Steve Bing. Podesta is personally involved in the independent campaign as well, through a 527 entity called Fund for America.

This plan poses enormous challenges. Who will make the decisions, what will be the Iraq/Iran message, who will deliver it and by what means? The independence of the 527 committees is based on an organizational separation from the political parties. But the message will likely be consistent with, if not identical to, the candidates' message, influenced by the same hawkish consultants. Yet the peace movement has an opening to exert its influence: it can demand a role in the independent campaign as a condition of enlisting its legions of local peace activists. The challenge will be to draft an antiwar formula that unites the peace forces and progressive Democrats rather than one that depresses vast numbers of antiwar voters.

Beyond the issue of message, there's the question of whether the independent campaign is controlled from the top or is open to the thousands of volunteers already devoted to antiwar efforts in their local communities. Matzzie is a brilliant field organizer in his early 30s, trained in the post-1960s staff-driven methods of groups like USAction. Most of these organizers have little knowledge of Iraq, foreign policy or peaceful alternatives to the "war on terror." Their backgrounds tend to be in labor or consumer organizing or door-to-door canvassing for donations. Typically, they are results-oriented (number of phone calls made, voters identified, "hits," etc.) rather than community-oriented. Ideally, Matzzie will map out a battle plan calling for cooperation where local groups already have strong track records (like New Hampshire, Iowa and northern Illinois, to take three examples) and new initiatives in areas lacking an active base. A final question to be finessed is whether the independent campaigns will invest in a long-term local strategy, including simple things like leaving contact lists behind with local groups, or whether they will pull up stakes and vanish on election day.

The challenge is to draft an antiwar message that unites peace forces and progressive Democrats rather than one that depresses antiwar voters.

The peace movement can succeed only by applying people pressure against the pillars of the war policy—public opinion, military recruitment and an ample war budget—through marching, confronting military recruiters and civil disobedience. The pillars have been eroding since 2004. The tactics that are most likely to accelerate the process are greater efforts at persuading the ambivalent voters. This is where the interests of the peace movement converge with Matzzie's operation.

A massively funded voter-identification and -registration drive and a get-out-the vote campaign have enormous potential to tip not only the presidential election but also the scales of public opinion. Rather than merely pounding away at a simplistic message—Republicans dangerous, Democrats better—such an effort would require, as a foundation, resources to educate voters and involve them in house meetings. The house-meeting approach allows for voter education and participation on a scale that cannot be achieved by hit pieces or TV spots. It is also critical for cultivating grassroots leadership capacity for election day turnout and beyond. Voters may be persuaded by a narrow end-the-war message, especially if Giuliani is the Republican candidate, but they will also need the ability to answer questions about the interconnected issues of Iraq, Iran, energy, healthcare and the threat posed by neoconservatives.

Only in this way will the peace movement succeed in expanding and intensifying antiwar feeling to a degree that will compel the politicians to abandon their six-year timetable for a far shorter one. In the worst-case alternatives, Giuliani and the neocons will roll to a narrow victory despite a platform of promising war, or the centrist Democrats will prevail without a mandate for rapid withdrawal of troops from Iraq

Tom Hayden, a Nation *editorial board member, is the author of* Ending the War in Iraq *(Akashic).*

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and negotiations plus containment toward Iran.

The coming war is a political one, to be fought at home. There will be a yearlong showdown that will determine the presidency and the climate of opinion. If the Republicans succeed in electing the next President, the Iraq War will continue and probably expand. If they lose the presidency, they are already positioning themselves to charge the Democrats with "losing" Iraq and ride that theme to a comeback in 2012.

The key dates in this coming domestic war will be:

January 2008 onward: the budget. There will be attempts to limit or reverse Bush's supplemental demand of $200 billion for a war that has already cost more than $470 billion. CAP recommends a goal of cutting the request in half. Two-thirds of Americans favor a reduction of some kind, and 46 percent favor sharp reductions. It appears that the best that can be hoped for in this battle is to rebuke Bush, reduce funding for the war and make the budget vote so painful that Congress members will never want to cast one again. There is no reason to support $5 billion to $10 billion for the sectarian torturers operating under cover of the Interior Ministry, for example. Already a high-level military commission has called on Congress to scrap the Iraqi police service as hopelessly corrupt, a position reflected in HR 3134 put forward by Representatives Maxine Waters, Barbara Lee and Lynne Woolsey. This simple focus on the Frankenstein monster fostered in Baghdad might generate a movement against using taxes for torture and thus begin to unravel the occupation.

January–February 2008: presidential primaries. The Democratic candidates have been at least shopping for the peace vote in the early primaries, if only to differentiate their brands from the others. Voting for Kucinich, Richardson or Gravel is a legitimate choice to support an important voice—but not a nominee. Joe Biden's proposal for partitioning Iraq is the most dangerous of any of the Democratic candidates' positions and should be rejected. John Edwards's proposal is the best of the front-runners', though it leaves a gaping loophole for "sufficient" US troops to continue fighting terrorists and training the Iraqi police. Barack Obama has been sharpening and improving his position somewhat, defining a more limited role for trainers and counterterrorism. Obama (and Edwards) also have toughened their stand against bombing Iran. That leaves Hillary Clinton struggling in the center, promising she will "end the war" while leaving a scaled-down force to fight Al Qaeda, train the Iraqis, resist Iranian encroachment and demonstrate her awareness that Iraq is "right in the heart of the oil region." What she means is anyone's guess, leaving her with little more than an anti-Bush "trust me" platform. These Democratic positions may underestimate the passionate demands of peace voters, potentially driving a significant fraction of those voters into apathy or toward third-party alternatives. All these candidate positions can be drawn out further in the heat of the early primaries by sharp questioning and selective voting by peace activists. The "bird-dogging" of candidates by New Hampshire Peace Action is an example.

April 2008: the Bush deadline for withdrawing 25,000 troops (by not extending their tours of duty). Unless the Administration has bombed Iran, Bush will use this deadline to promote the Nixon-like theme that the war is "winding down." The Democratic candidate will have to insist that 25,000 is far too small a number of troops. This risks a Republican attack that the Democratic position is "too extreme"; there is also the risk that Democratic candidates would fall into Bush's trap by calling a 25,000-troop withdrawal a "positive first step."

Summer 2008: convention protests and platforms. The time is now for advocates and insiders to write and propose platform language that promises to truly end the war, without the usual ambiguity that drives activists to despair. Both conventions will be held in protest-friendly cities, offering an outside strategy to highlight the differences and deficiencies in the two-party debate.

Fall 2008: House and Senate races. It is perhaps here that groups like MoveOn and Progressive Democrats of America can have the greatest effect, by bolstering the numbers of anti-war senators and representatives who favor terminating the war in 2009. Think: Senator Al Franken.

November 2008–January 2009. This will be a test of whether the peace movement will hit the streets and pressure the incoming Administration to promptly end the war or face four more years of deepening confrontation.

If a one-year campaign seems too long, consider Vietnam for perspective. After the McGovern Democrats took over the Democratic Party in 1972 only to lose the presidency, it took three long years before Nixon's "Vietnamization" policies ended in debacle and in a cutoff of Congressional funding. Along the way, a young Senate staffer named Tom Daschle spearheaded a campaign to block Nixon's funding for a secret gulag of "tiger cage" torture chambers. Like Baghdad today, Saigon was a US-backed police state, a hideous system abetted by 10,000 American "civilian contractors." American activists were arrested outside the US Embassy in Saigon for distributing leaflets against the torturers. Another 1 million educational pamphlets were passed out in fall 1972 by local organizers in a hundred cities. Those local groups demanded that candidates sign a peace pledge or face the loss of critical votes.

It all seemed too little, but the pillars of the policy kept crumbling in Vietnam and at home. In May 1973, in response to Indochina and the Watergate impeachment crises, both houses of Congress voted a deadline of August 15 for further funding of American combat forces. Henry Kissinger refused to comply with any deadlines, and his position was defeated on a tie 204-204 House vote that allowed only a last extension of the bombing until that August. The country was so divided that a small, determined faction was able to tip the scales.

We are approaching a similar chasm in public opinion today. The neoconservatives, conservatives and liberal hawks have been discredited for their foolish 2002 belief in a quick and easy invasion of Iraq. A beleaguered neocon minority is pressing to strike Iran and stay the course in Iraq. Democrats, despite their electoral majority, have not proven to be as tenacious about Iraq as the neocons. Nor are progressive activists always as educated and focused for battle as their adversaries. With a majority of Americans wanting and expecting a withdrawal from Iraq, the outcome of 2008 may depend on who has the greater will to win. ■

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Are you missing the luxury of warm, relaxing baths? Well, grab your towel!

By John Fleming

For many of us, nothing is more relaxing than a long, luxurious bath. Unfortunately, because of safety concerns, many people, particularly older people, have to forego this simple pleasure. Sure, you can spend big bucks to remodel your bathroom to provide a bathtub you can use, but who wants to do that? Now there's a better way, and it lets you use the bath that's in your home today.

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The War Comes Home to Iowa

The absence of a definitive antiwar candidate has divided the state's peace activists.

by ARI BERMAN

Des Moines

It's Veterans Day, and a group of antiwar Democrats have assembled at Chet Guinn's firehouse in downtown Des Moines. Guinn, a retired Methodist minister who still likes to slide down the fire pole, bought the building in 1980 for $1 and converted it into a community hub. When the caucuses roll around every four years, Guinn says, "the fire station comes alive." A picture of Paul Wellstone sits near the pole. Above the wide glass doors in front is a quote from Eisenhower: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

The gathering was organized by Sue Dinsdale, a self-described "pretty typical Iowa mom" from the town of Huxley, just north of Des Moines. Dinsdale became an antiwar activist when her oldest son, who enlisted in the Army in 1999, came home from his second tour in Iraq. "I was yearning for something to do," she says. "I couldn't just sit at home and see other kids go through what he did." Last summer she left her job as membership director at the local YMCA and became a field organizer for Americans Against Escalation in Iraq (AAEI). She's been hounding Iowa Republicans about their support for the war ever since. It's Dinsdale's job to make sure Iraq stays in the news. As such, she's a good barometer here of public opinion on the war.

I ask Dinsdale if antiwar Democrats have reached consensus on whom to support in the January caucuses. The short answer is no. "There might be six people in a room supporting six different candidates," she replies. In 2004 the ten people sitting in Guinn's spacious living room backed either Dennis Kucinich or Howard Dean. It was a fairly easy call: true believers went for Kucinich, while pragmatists rallied around Dean. This year, antiwar activists are having a much harder time picking a candidate; many of Guinn's guests back Bill Richardson because of his pledge to pull out all troops within a year, but there are Barack Obama and John Edwards supporters here too.

One thing they agree on, though, is mistrust of Hillary Clinton. Everett Fell, a former sportswriter from New Jersey who moved to Iowa as an organizer for AAEI, reflects a common view when he says, "I like all the other candidates, but I have a problem with Hillary."

"At least in Iowa, the peace community is thoroughly disillusioned with her," says Jeremy Jansen, a young organizer from Wisconsin who moved to Iowa as part of AAEI's Iraq campaign. On November 8 nine war protesters, led by Kathy Kelly of Voices for Creative Nonviolence, occupied Clinton's campaign office in Des Moines for more than seven hours,

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

placing Support the Troops, End the War signs out front and, once inside, reading the names of dead American soldiers and Iraqi civilians. It's telling that they initially chose to target Clinton, along with the office of Rudy Giuliani. "We did this because Hillary voted for the war in Iraq and refuses to apologize for it, because her rhetoric…is not only imprecise but also contradicts her public comments that she won't withdraw all the troops before 2013, because she voted for pro-war with Iran measures…and for her general hawkish foreign policy stances," wrote David Goodner, a senior at the University of Iowa and a member of its antiwar committee. "She floats so quickly, vacillates so often, that I don't think people have any confidence that she will expedite the end of the war," says Ed Fallon, a former state representative and candidate for governor who has endorsed Edwards.

Polls show that the war is still the number-one issue for Iowa Democrats, leading healthcare and the economy by a comfortable margin. While antiwar activists may be opposed to Hillary, the polls are more ambiguous, reflecting an electorate still very much in flux. A number of polls from May through October showed Clinton to be the favorite among that broad sector of Democratic voters who may not be political junkies but who still cite the war as their top issue. In an October 29 University of Iowa Hawkeye Poll, for example, Clinton leads Obama by two points overall but by fifteen among voters whose top priority is ending the war. Yet the ramped-up criticism from Obama and Edwards does seem to be damaging Hillary; in a mid-November *Washington Post* Iowa poll, Obama not only leads Clinton overall but does better on the question of who would best handle Iraq.

Clinton's generally favorable poll numbers on the war confounded most of the activists I talked to. But it shouldn't be

Ari Berman is a Nation *contributing writer.*

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surprising: her campaign has been more aggressive than anyone anticipated in defusing what even her aides describe as her biggest vulnerability—her 2002 vote in favor of the war and her refusal to apologize for it. Since declaring her candidacy, she's cautiously embraced an antiwar position. "If we in Congress don't end this war before January of 2009, as President, I will," she said in February, a month after entering the race. In May she voted to use the Congressional power of the purse to end the war, a step she had long resisted. In July, at a campaign event in Des Moines, she unveiled her plan to move combat troops out of Iraq (while leaving an unspecified number behind for a variety of tasks). A week later she mailed a DVD of that plan to every Iowa Democrat. In October she stumped with liberal lion George McGovern in the antiwar bastion of Iowa City. Former Ambassador Joe Wilson, another early opponent of the war, has been dispatched to the state as a key surrogate. Clinton's campaign has distributed signs that say Support the Troops, End the War on the front and Iowans for Hillary on the back.

'In Iowa as many people are listening to what the candidates say about Iran as about Iraq.'
—Jeffrey Weiss, AFSC peace coordinator

Further working to her advantage is the failure of her top rivals to draw a clear distinction between themselves and Clinton on Iraq. War opponents here often point to a September debate in New Hampshire where Edwards and Obama refused to commit to withdrawing all troops from Iraq by the end of their first term, in 2013. That answer gave an opening to the so-called second-tier candidates, notably Richardson, who began highlighting his plan to get all the troops out within a year and has doubled his Iowa staff. "The most important issue affecting this race is the war," Richardson said at the Iowa Democrats' Jefferson-Jackson dinner on November 10. "There is a difference with the candidates on how to end the war." To stress their point, his campaign supporters draped banners that said "2013?" and "GetOurTroopsOut.com." After his speech, the usually attack-shy Richardson campaign distributed Clinton quotes indicating that she might leave as many as 60,000 troops in Iraq for years to come.

Yet rival supporters concede that Hillary has succeeded in muddying the waters. "A lot of Democrats think the difference on the war is between the Democrats and the Republicans," says Peggy Huppert, a former Des Moines party chair and the head of Iowans for Sensible Priorities, which advocates cutting the military budget to pay for domestic needs and which recently endorsed Edwards. "I've heard people say the war is why they're choosing Richardson, for example. But I've heard a lot of other people be more ambivalent. They want it ended, but they think any Democrat will do that."

Kucinich, with Richardson the staunchest and most consistent antiwar candidate, hasn't campaigned much in Iowa and has almost no organization here. All the Dems have pledged to end the war if elected, yet none have attracted the antiwar fervor or backing of Dean in 2003. "Without a clearcut peace candidate," Guinn notes, "it's harder to energize the peace community."

Still, the caucus remains too close to call, and despite Clinton's deft positioning, her rivals are betting she stays vulnerable on the war. At a recent stop in Cedar Rapids, Edwards opened by pledging to end the war and criticized Clinton for vowing to leave troops behind. "She says she'll end the war, but she's gonna keep combat troops in Iraq and keep combat missions," Edwards told me afterward. By contrast, Edwards would deploy troops only to protect the US Embassy. I asked Edwards if Democratic caucusgoers notice such distinctions. "Some do," he responded. Would it be enough to swing the election? "Hard to know," he replied. Gordon Fischer, head of the Iowa Democratic Party in 2003–04 and an Obama supporter, predicts that after the results come in on caucus night, pundits will write the following words: "Boy, Senator Clinton's vote for the war sure hurt her. Apparently, she just didn't explain it away adequately for Iowa Dems."

The controversy over Iran may be an even bigger storm cloud for Clinton. By voting in favor of the Kyl-Lieberman resolution on September 26—which called the Iranian Revolutionary Guards a terrorist organization and gave George W. Bush another rationale for keeping troops in Iraq, and for potentially moving the war next door—Clinton opened a new wound and exposed old ones, igniting Iowa's peace community. "In Iowa people were quite upset about her vote," says Ismael Hossein-Zadeh, an Iranian-American professor of economics at Drake University, in Des Moines. The blowback came to a head October 7, when a voter asked Clinton at a campaign stop in New Hampton, Iowa, "Why should I support your candidacy…if it appears you haven't learned from your past mistakes?" Clinton grew testy, and the exchange became a rallying cry for her opponents.

On October 23 the *New York Times* dubbed Iran "the new Iraq." War-weary Iowans, only 4 percent of whom favor military action against Iran, began paying close attention. "In Iowa as many people are listening to what the candidates say about Iran as about Iraq," says Jeffrey Weiss, peace coordinator for the American Friends Service Committee. According to Everett Fell of AAEI, "people seem even more intense about Iran." After the Kyl-Lieberman vote, Clinton immediately went into damage control, sending Iowans another mailer claiming the bill "was clearly a vote for stepped-up diplomacy, not military action." She also signed on to legislation prohibiting Bush from attacking Iran without Congressional approval.

Yet doubts about Clinton's intentions linger. "Her vote was potentially very damaging," says former State Representative Fallon. "I haven't heard many people who were convinced by the response." Lori Nelson, head of Iowans for Peace, an umbrella group for more than twenty organizations, says she is "really concerned about things Clinton says about Iran" and has begun co-sponsoring films with the University of Iowa's Persian student group and working with NGOs in Iran in an attempt to "be proactive."

However, foreign policy—or any one issue, for that matter—probably won't determine Iowans' choice for President in January. In the absence of a major misstep by Clinton, or

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major policy differences coming to light, the race is likely to be decided by the campaign that can best marshal its supporters on a post–New Year's night and by the candidate viewed as the most capable of defeating the Republican nominee. After all, in 2004 caucusgoers forsook Dean in favor of the more "electable" John Kerry, who also clearly benefited from a better state apparatus. Tim Gauger, a leader of the University of Iowa's antiwar committee, says, "Why would it be any different now, when everyone just wants to beat a Republican?" A recent *New York Times* poll found that half of Iowa Democrats would be willing to support a candidate who "favors keeping troops in Iraq longer than you would like," if it meant a GOP defeat.

The war itself often fades into the background of everyday life here. Though 2007 has been the deadliest year for US troops in Iraq, casualties have declined recently and the war has often been nudged off the front page. A chant at the weekly peace vigil in downtown Iowa City in early November, which drew thirty or so people—a decent crowd by Iowa standards—summed up this disconnect. "Iowa City wake up!" a student with a bullhorn shouted. "The war is going on right now!"

It's not that antiwar sentiment has disappeared. Iowa is less hawkish and more internationalist than most swing states. There are vigils, yard signs, meetings, sit-ins. Iraq comes up in some form at every town-hall stop. Every Democrat mentions the need to get out of Iraq in his or her stump speech. In 2006 Iowans elected two new Democratic Congressmen and flipped both the state House and Senate blue, the only state besides New Hampshire with such a Democratic tidal wave. And yet the war goes on.

Perhaps that's why, after four and a half years of occupation and no end in sight, Iowa, like the rest of the country, is suffering from war fatigue. "They marched, wrote letters, elected a Democratic Congress and now Congress is funding the war—and Hillary is giving the President the authority to go into Iran!" says Nicholas Johnson, a University of Iowa law professor and former FCC commissioner who leans toward Richardson. "What's a voter to do?"

In conversations with scores of Iowa Democrats, it's evident that domestic issues like healthcare and the economy are a big deal—and getting bigger. Yet the greatest concerns are still tied to the staggering costs, in lives and money, of the Iraq War. Iowans for Sensible Priorities, an offshoot of Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, started by Ben & Jerry's co-founder Ben Cohen, is perhaps the largest, most organized peace group here. It has distributed charts illustrating how the military budget crowds out domestic needs. Although the group backs Edwards, supporters from every campaign brandish its stickers and pins.

Like Hurricane Katrina, the war is a metaphor for all that has gone wrong under George W. Bush. The lack of antiwar sentiment among the GOP frontrunners helps explain the surge of support for Ron Paul, the only Republican candidate to call for withdrawal. His signs and supporters show up everywhere you turn.

Former Iowa City Representative Jim Leach, one of the few House Republicans to vote against the war in 2002, points out that Iowa has experienced one of the largest per capita National Guard deployments to Iraq of any state. A day before Veterans Day, 130 more Guardsmen got ready to ship out. "We have an awful lot of people who have served in Iraq," Leach says. "And they have increasing doubts about the judgment of it all."

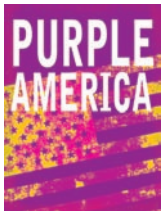
Clinton's adroit maneuvering, combined with the absence of a definitive antiwar challenger, may have divided the state's peace community, at least from an electoral perspective. But dissent among those who serve, the popularity of groups like Sensible Priorities and AAEI, the persistence of dozens of smaller organizations and widespread dissatisfaction with the current policy prove that antiwar sentiment still runs deep in the heartland, waiting to be tapped, if only it is given clearer expression.

"Sometimes I think a lot of people forget about the war," Dinsdale admits. "But then they see a pin, or a sticker, or a sign, and it brings it all back." ■

Fumbling Florida

Have Democrats already blown the biggest swing state?

by BOB MOSER



Orlando

On the final Friday of a parched and quarrelsome October, Florida Democrats were bumping around a hallway in Disney's faux-elegant Yacht and Beach Club Resort on the opening night of their state convention, perusing campaign items for sale (three Hillary buttons for $5!), sussing out the evening's schedule ("The progressives are supposed to be having a party, but where are they?") and, mostly, grousing about the conspicuous absence of presidential candidates.

Bob Moser is a Nation *contributing writer.*

"This whole thing here is a joke," said John Taylor, a hulking schoolteacher from Jacksonville wearing the tallest, most bodacious Chef Boyardee–style, star-spangled red-white-and-blue hat you ever saw. "How stupid the Democrats are—we're shooting ourselves in the foot!" Taylor angrily recalled some of the Republicans' tactics for suppressing the Democratic vote in 2000 and 2004. "They stole two elections, and now we've been working six years to make sure that don't happen again. And the *Democrats* screw us!"

"Forget that," his friend said. "You're beating a dead horse. I blame the candidates. You've got, what, ten or eleven of them? And not one of them shows up here?"

It's rumored that Mike Gravel will be in town tomorrow, I

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note (and he did appear, at the convention and an antiwar rally). "If he's here, that's where my vote is going," said the friend.

Not Taylor's. "I'm going to have to resign from the Duval [County] Democratic Party"—he serves on its executive committee—"just so that I can vote for somebody else. I'm going to vote Libertarian, probably. Or I might cross over and vote for Huckabee. My wife will kill me. She's the treasurer of the Duval Democratic Party! She retired from her job to work full time, for no money, for the Democrats. And I'm the man in the hat! But why not? What difference does it make? The Democrats don't care about us in Florida."

"I think it sucks," says Bob Matherne, a bearded middle-aged fellow in a Kucinich shirt. Matherne's been registering LGBT voters in Sarasota for months now, but daily headlines featuring the war between national and Florida Democrats have made it tough. "People don't understand the situation—and neither do I, really. They're asking for clarification: 'What's going on? The Republicans aren't being penalized for the early primary. Why are *we* being penalized? Why would Democrats do this, already knowing about Florida's problems with voting?'"

Florida Democrats can surely be excused for feeling a wee bit put-upon—and confused. Across town just the weekend before, 5,000 Florida Republicans had been dined, wined and wooed by their presidential candidates at a lavish event culminating in a debate aired on Fox. Meanwhile, Florida Democrats—who'd planned to trump the Republican weekend with their own presidential extravaganza—found themselves in the bizarre position of being boycotted by their candidates.

This strange saga began innocuously enough. Fearing likely attempts by big states like Michigan and Florida to disrupt the parties' primary calendars with early dates in 2008, Republicans and Democrats ruled at their 2004 conventions that states trying to butt in before Iowa and New Hampshire would lose half their delegates. The Republicans left it there. The Democrats decided to try and fix things. The Democratic National Committee's rules committee was tasked with bringing order to the chaotic primaries. Twelve states applied for two additional early primary slots, which were awarded earlier this year to South Carolina and Nevada. Democrats in other states could not vote before February 5.

That created a sticky situation for Florida Democrats when, to nobody's surprise, the Republican-controlled state legislature passed a law in May scheduling the state's primary for January 29. (In most states, primary dates are set by the parties.) The primary date was wrapped up in a bill mandating a paper trail for the 2008 election—a popular measure the minority Democrats could not afford to oppose. Besides, the loss of delegates was largely a toothless penalty, since according to precedent the Democrats' eventual presidential nominee controls the seating of delegates—and surely wouldn't alienate folks from the nation's largest swing state by turning them away.

But the DNC did not leave it there. In August the rules committee voted to strip *all* the state's delegates unless Florida came up with an alternative to the January 29 voting. "I understand Florida's dilemma," DNC rules committee member Donna Brazile told me later. "But this is not about states' rights; this is about a process we're trying to keep some control over." Two weeks after the DNC vote, Democratic chairs in the "First Four" primary states jacked up the ante with their notorious "four-state pledge" demanding the candidates focus exclusively on them. The signees—including John Edwards, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton—agreed to do no campaigning in Florida or any other state that might try to jump the gun. And under party rules, "campaigning" means just about everything: e-mail messages; calls to voters; TV, radio or newspaper ads; rallies; hiring campaign workers; holding press conferences. The only thing Democrats are allowed to do in Florida—where folks have been complaining for years, with some justification, about being used as an ATM for the party—is fundraise.

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

As Florida Democrats bayed in protest, DNC chair Howard Dean salted their wounds by opining that their votes "essentially won't count." Almost overnight, the unsavory reputation Florida Republicans had earned during the riotous Gore v. Bush 2000 recount battle was relegated to ancient history, and the Republicans' sagging hopes of carrying Florida—where Democrats scored big in the 2006 midterms—were suddenly sky-high. "The Democrats like to talk about Republicans disenfranchising black voters in Florida," state GOP chair Jim Greer shouted happily at a Black Republicans soiree. "How many delegates will the Democrats be sending from Florida to their national convention? Zero!"

Not exactly music to Democratic ears. "Leave it to Democrats to create a distraction born out of a nuanced disagreement over some arcane party rule," fumed Florida House minority leader Dan Gelber in a letter to Dean, as the rhetorical fur flew between Washington and Tallahassee. The options for Florida Democrats were hardly attractive—"a lose-lose situation," said Steve Geller, the State Senate minority leader. While there was no way to change the January 29 primary date, the DNC said Florida could come into compliance by effec-

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tively declaring that vote meaningless—a dubious move, to say the least, in the "state of disenfranchisement"—and either holding subsequent caucuses, a state convention to choose delegates or a pricey vote-by-mail campaign. "Why would we have the presidential candidates' names on a ballot, have people go to the polls and vote and then find out that we're not counting their votes?" asked former state chair Terrie Brady. "We don't want to confuse Florida voters more than they're already confused." Even so, the Florida Democrats were seriously pondering the vote-by-mail option when Governor Charlie Crist and GOP legislators placed a regressive property tax referendum on the January 29 ballot. A strong Democratic turnout would be essential to defeating it.

In late September Florida's Democratic leaders voted to stick with the early primary. The four-state pledge kicked in, transforming the campaign into a running farce. When Obama emerged from a Tampa fundraiser and answered a few reporters' questions, his no-no made outraged headlines in Iowa. In an absurd episode later that day, the chastened candidate left another fundraiser with *St. Petersburg Times* reporter Adam Smith in hot pursuit. In response to a series of questions about Florida issues, Obama finally said, "I'm not allowed to talk to the press, guys!" Smith persisted: "Isn't it up to you?" Obama: "Nope!" Smith: "Aren't you the guy trying to lead the country?" Obama: "I signed a pledge!"

Meanwhile, the Republican candidates continued to roam the state freely, crowing about "Democratic disenfranchisement" and about how, in the words of disgusted Democrat Mark Esche, "the Democrats want our money but don't give a damn about our votes." (And the money had been flowing: by the end of September, Democrats had raised more than $10 million in Florida, triple the amount of the First Four states combined.) Esche, like many of the 2,600 who showed up for the Democratic convention, wore two buttons expressing most party members' sentiments: No Vote, No Money, read one. The other was stamped with the name of the DNC chair, with a screw superimposed: Screw Howard Dean. (Ironically, Dean's candidacy for DNC chair was enthusiastically backed by Florida delegates in 2005.) Senator Bill Nelson and Representative Alcee Hastings filed suit against Dean and the DNC for violating Florida Democrats' voting rights and "impairing minority voter participation" in violation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; a federal hearing is scheduled for December 5.

"Every time the DNC calls me up I say, My wallet is closed," said Esche. "If they're going to treat us like dirt, I don't see any reason to give them any help. Because, really: Iowa? New Hampshire? South Carolina? They're sideshows. The Democrats are punishing themselves. And isn't that stupid?"

The only happy Democrats in Orlando were the "Hill people"—none more so than Mary Wilson, a frizzy-headed bundle of cheer who's served as president of the Hillary Rodham Clinton Fan Club since 1995. "I just loved her all the way back then, and it's just gotten worse since then," Wilson said, her sweatshirt drooping from the weight of (by my hasty count) twenty-three Hillary and

Thousands have lived without love, not one
without water.

- W.H. Auden

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Billary buttons, along with one of the ubiquitous Screw Deans. "The realities of politics, and what goes on behind closed doors, just burns me up," Wilson said. "But what are you gonna do? Anyway," she said, reaffixing the beam on her face, "Hillary will fix it! I give her carte blanche!"

Senator Clinton's fans have reason to feel giddy: their candidate is the lone Democrat benefiting from this latest "only in Florida" fracas. Just as in Michigan, where Clinton was the sole leading Democrat to leave her name on the January 15 primary ballot, she has outmaneuvered the opposition here. While the other Democrats eagerly signed the four-state pledge and pandered to Iowa and New Hampshire voters by boasting of their fidelity to the party rules, Clinton was the last to sign it, issuing a tepid statement through her campaign manager—and quickly dispatching putative First Gentleman Bill to the state in her stead. At the time she signed the pledge, Clinton held thirty-point leads in the Florida polls. With her challengers surrendering the field, she still does. "My girl is savvy!" Wilson says.

Her foes, meanwhile, were not. Obama's campaign manager called the Florida primary "nothing more than a straw poll." Edwards's campaign, terrified of bad press in Des Moines or Manchester, sent nary a sign, bumper sticker or button to Orlando. (There were some goodies for the Obama, Clinton and Richardson folks.) A furious supporter called Edwards's headquarters and was told the campaign "thought their presence was not encouraged." Later, on Saturday, a couple of rogue Edwards backers commandeered a table and decorated it with hastily hand-painted signs. In keeping with the less than festive atmosphere of the weekend, there was a bitch session in full swing when I sidled up. "Republicans are saying, Look at these assholes—they're shooting themselves in the foot again," said Francis Goss, a bearded refugee from New Jersey. "You don't make war with your own party!" cried a local pipefitter in a Vietnam veterans ball cap. "That's the kind of thing you do in a back alley, have these fights—not in public!"

> DC Dems 'seem to be having a hard time accepting that [they're] really jeopardizing the election in Florida.' —party activist Jack Shifrel

Have the Democrats already blown their chance to retake Florida next November? Dean has tried to cast the dispute as "a fight among politicians" that will be long forgotten by general-election time. "This is such a process story," says Brazile, "that I just don't know at the end of the day that voters will take this out on the Democrats—this is a very volatile election season." But for six months and counting, the Democratic fracas has been the major topic of political buzz in Florida, with a steady drumbeat of local television soundbites ("The Democrats will be in Orlando this weekend—the question is, Will their candidates be here?") and newspaper and magazine headlines (Will Dean's War on Florida Backfire?). According to recent polls, a whopping 77 percent of Floridians have heard about the Democratic boycott—pretty impressive for "inside baseball." By a 62-to-16 margin across party lines, they think the DNC is off its rocker. And in a statistic cited by Senator Nelson at the convention, where he received a hero's welcome for suing the DNC (and for his romp over Katherine Harris last November), independent Florida voters already say they're 22 percent less likely to vote for a Democrat because of the whole primary mess—far more than enough, as the *St. Petersburg Times* editorialized, to "turn Florida red." In another sign of trouble, Clinton has lost her lead in Florida general-election polls since the Democrats' boycott commenced, with Rudy Giuliani moving ahead.

"There's no question the Democrats will lose votes over this," says State Senator Geller, who spent much of the weekend trying to hunt down a journalist from Iowa who was reportedly—and rather bravely—stalking the convention. "The only question is how many. There was great anger at the Republicans after 2000. Today, there's great anger but it's at the Democrats." *Among* the Democrats, too. A few county leaders have reported losing longtime activists, some so outraged they've switched parties. Party stalwarts are encouraging other Democrats to cut off the party; top Democratic fundraiser Wayne Hogan of Jacksonville called Dean personally to cancel a DNC fundraiser this fall. Meanwhile, as Geller said, the Republicans "are smart—they won't let it die." In early October the Republican Party of Florida mailed fliers to thousands of registered Democrats picturing an elderly man dabbing tearful old eyes and the caption: "Has being a Florida Democrat brought you to tears? You're not alone." Across the bottom, the message is more blunt: Ready to Switch Parties? A voter-registration form was helpfully enclosed. The GOP has run ads proclaiming that while the Democratic "contenders have come here to take our money, they won't stand up for our right to be heard"; online, the party is tallying up Floridians' contributions to the absent Democrats. And, for good measure, they're working up an anti–gay marriage ballot initiative to bring out Christian conservatives next November.

"The Washington Democrats seem to be having a hard time accepting that what they've done is a serious mistake and really jeopardizing the election in Florida," says Jack Shifrel, who's been active with the party since Bobby Kennedy's campaign in 1968. Shifrel circulated a passionate "Dear Fellow Democrats" flier at the convention, urging them to withhold campaign money and "tell the DNC that threatening not to allow Florida Democrats to participate fully in the 2008 Democratic Convention will make the Democratic Party the butt of even more embarrassing jokes." Shifrel, who hopes to help organize an eventual Clinton campaign in Broward County, says, "It was a dumb mistake to take a chance on turning off Democrats and independents here. It is fostering an image of, 'Oh, here they go again. They don't want to win. They're such a circular firing squad.' All the stupid jokes that people make about Democrats.

"It's incredible when you think about it. I believe the issues are on our side, more than ever. I believe we have better candidates. But it doesn't mean we're going to win." ■

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Exchange

(continued from page 2)

not so important, and always keeping space open for critique.
Steven Sherman

Portland, Ore.
We want justice, but the world is unjust. It's hard to live in a world that promises us no justice. This makes faith in ultimate justice and a God who can deliver it pretty compelling. The "new atheists" need to be reminded of something Marx wrote 150 years ago: "The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions."
Clayton Morgareidge

Brooklyn, N.Y.
I am tired of the self-congratulatory happiness with the modern world that most antireligious authors display. Their books are invariably written by successful males with ample inner and financial resources—the "winners" of our market-driven liberal world. I admire these men, but I am tired of their expectation that everyone should be able to celebrate the strengths and be immune to the drawbacks of our modern society. Modernity works for those who have ample family resources, who are entrepreneurial and independent. For those who need some help and support from a caring society, modernity often fails. Blindness to the inability of modern society to meet human needs will ensure that people continue to turn to traditional religions to meet those needs—for community, for meaning, for support, for moral strength. Demanding that everyone be happy with science and an individualistic, market-driven, opportunity society will not result in the demise of organized religion. A compassionate and data-driven concern for understanding and meeting human needs would certainly be more helpful.
Carmela Federico

Baltimore
Ronald Aronson writes, "Living without God means turning toward something. To flourish we need coherent secular popular philosophies that effectively answer life's vital questions." Many of us have rejected religion because it clearly does not effectively answer life's questions. Why must these be answered? I would argue that we need to deal with questions that cannot be answered. What we don't need is another elaborate construct that pretends to answer them.
Leonard Frank

East Hampton, N.Y.
As an atheist I do not need or want a secular philosophy to substitute for religion. I don't want any substitute for religion. I hold myself responsible for ethics, morality or whatever makes a responsible person. Any organized substitute inevitably turns into a power structure run by a few whose values may not be mine.
Jean Kemper Hoffman

Aronson Replies

Detroit
I appreciate Matthew Casner's objection to the term "new atheists." When I first used it ["Faith No More," *BookForum*, Oct./Nov. 2005], I had two themes in mind. First, ours is the first generation of modern unbelievers to have abandoned talking about a march of progress that projects the victory of Enlightenment reason and the demise of religion. Atheism/agnosticism/secularism is not being helped along by history and has to stand on its own. Second, I applied the term not to Sam Harris, the only one of the four authors I discussed there, but to two far more congenial writers (Julian Baggini and Erik Wielenberg), who like myself are less concerned with combating religion than presenting a positive case for disbelief. But despite Casner's qualification, Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and Christopher Hitchens (as well as Victor Stenger, author of *God: The Failed Hypothesis*) are "new" because their audience is not the small atheist subculture; they have broken through to the mainstream, smashing the taboo on criticizing religion publicly. This is a remarkable achievement.

Thanks to Lori Lipman Brown for calling our attention to the SCA, and especially for noting that it already does some of what I am advocating. Working with religious groups on behalf of the First Amendment is urgently important as Democrats vie with one another to stress their religious faith rather than defend the separation of church and state. I am calling for more: a reorientation among liberal religionists and secularists—yes, believers and atheists—toward each other. We are up against a profoundly antidemocratic tendency. Our common enemy, as the Rev. James Summitt points out, is the kind of fundamentalist-tinged religion that insists that appeals to God should trump constitutional freedoms and democratic deliberation.

To change today's climate, we need to explore beyond tactical alliances between religious and secular Americans, forging new understandings based on mutual respect and, yes, shared values. *Nation* readers, both believers and freethinkers, should have no difficulty agreeing: the mutual respect many of us have gained from working with each other politically for a generation should be deepened and made explicit. As Edd Doerr and Steven Sherman wisely indicate, today's essential issues and movements must connect secularists with people of a religious culture if they are to be successful. This might include the commitment to actually learn about each other's common and different traditions. I agree with Amy Melton that we secularists and believers of the left can model a new kind of behavior about living with diverse religious/secular differences and commonalities. We will do this by being genuinely "new atheists" and "new believers"—confident in our outlooks, willing to share our doubts, contemporary in our willingness to adapt to new knowledge and in our awareness that divergences of worldviews are inevitable.

Carmela Federico eloquently voices the fact that in our society there are good reasons people turn to religion, and critics of religion who read *The Nation* should never stop thinking about the human needs that go unmet in our society. Clayton Morgareidge says this in his clear and simple demand for justice and by using Marx's still-ringing words. To Carmela and Clayton, and to Steven's good words about creating communities of struggle, I can only say, Amen.

Once we reach this level of analysis it's time to answer my critics who bristle at my calling for a secular philosophy that answers life's vital questions. Of course, all of them certainly have their own nonreligious answers. What Jean Kemper Hoffman and Leonard Frank claim to dislike is anything elaborate or organized, but I challenge them to avoid these traps the minute they begin to explain their own nonreligious worldview to their friends or family or children. My own effort to do so, the "new atheist" book *Living Without God*, is nearly completed and about to go to press. It will present a contemporary secular worldview—an atheist popular philosophy. I hope it stimulates discussion, and that in response other secularists will spell out their own outlooks.
Ronald Aronson

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Books & the Arts.

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Gerda Taro, "Three men in the window of the Hotel Colón, headquarters of the PSUC (United Socialist Party of Catalonia), Barcelona," 1936

Dark Rooms

by SUSIE LINFIELD

A smile is the strangest thing. In the right context it can illuminate the world, suggest kindness or joy, invite us into intimacy. But in the wrong setting, or on the wrong faces, it seems creepy, malevolent, even disgusting: a sign of moral corruption.

These thoughts were prompted by a visit, in October, to the four interconnected Spanish Civil War shows at the International Center of Photography in New York City (on view through January 6) and by a series of photographs that the *New York Times* had published the previous month. One of the first photos a viewer encounters at the museum is called "Republican militiamembers, Barcelona"; it was taken by Gerda Taro in August 1936. It shows a young, handsome couple sitting on rattan deck chairs; in the background is a blurry collection of trees. The man, dark-haired, wears a button-down shirt and a tie under his coveralls and sports a pointed hat with a star, which would have identified to which of Spain's many left-wing groups he belonged. The woman, her smooth blond hair pulled away from her face, wears a dark shirt and, probably, trousers; she rests her head on the back of her chair. The man and woman tilt their heads toward each other as the sun bathes their faces, and they seem almost to explode with laughter: they must have shared a thought that was deliciously intimate, or deliciously funny, or perhaps both. They look healthy, strong, hopeful and in love: radiance is the word for this. And between them, gripped in the man's left hand—we can clearly map the veins in his forearm—stands a huge rifle.

The *Times* photos were full of laughter too. In one, a gleeful group of young, uniformed women and a few men—one of whom plays an accordion—surge across a wooden bridge as they try to escape a rainstorm. In another, a group of well-coiffed, pretty young women, all wearing dark pleated skirts and neat white blouses, sit on the ledge of a deck as they eat blueberries and smile for the camera. Anyone who claims we can no longer be shocked by photographs is wrong; for these banal pictures—part of a newly discovered trove of snapshots taken by an anonymous SS officer in the summer of 1944—depict a group of Auschwitz guards relaxing and at play. (As Jean Hatzfeld showed in *Machete Season*, his book of interviews with Rwandan *genocidaires*, torture and murder *are* hard work.) The Auschwitz employees look healthy, strong, confident and cheerful: horror is the word for this.

All of which is to say: in looking at photographs, especially those that document the political crises of our time, context is (almost) everything. A smile can welcome a new world or announce its annihilation.

Gerda Taro died seventy years ago, but the ICP show is the first major exhibition of her work in this country. She was born Gerta Pohorylle in 1910 in Germany, to parents who were recent immigrants from Galicia. She left Germany in 1933 after being arrested, then released, by the Nazis: as a Jew and a leftist, she was no longer at home in her homeland. Moving to Paris, she met André Friedmann—also a leftist, a Jew and a stateless exile—whom the world would come to know as Robert Capa. She became his manager and his lover; he taught her how to photograph. (As the show's catalog makes clear, Taro was intent on becoming a picture-maker in her own right, not on serving as anyone's muse.) Under her guidance, the two changed their names to sound more modern, more glamorous and, perhaps, less

Susie Linfield writes about culture and politics, and directs the Cultural Reporting and Criticism program in the journalism department at New York University.

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Jewish; after all, anti-Semites lived in Paris too. Though Taro's parents remained, as her biographer Irme Schaber writes, "attached to the culture of the shtetl," photos of their daughter reveal her to be the very model of a "modern" woman, with her short blond hair, smart clothes, forthright smile and black beret.

In August 1936—only weeks after Franco launched his rebellion—Taro and Capa went to Spain, where they lived and worked together, documenting the war on the Republican side from both military and civilian vantages. On July 25, 1937, in the wake of a fierce battle near Brunete, Taro was accidentally struck by a Republican tank. She died, age 26, the next day—a death from which, his biographers agree, Capa never recovered. (Though horrible and premature, Taro's death was far kinder than those of her family: trying to immigrate to Palestine, they got only as far as Yugoslavia, where, after the Nazi invasion, they were murdered.) The French Communist Party organized Taro's funeral, which tens of thousands attended: she was hailed as an antifascist heroine and is thought to be the first woman photographer to be killed in war, though that should be considered a sadness rather than an accomplishment. But her photojournalism, which spanned only a year, has been largely forgotten; her pictures have often been attributed to Capa; and she became identified solely as Capa's sidekick. Posthumously, *Life* magazine described her as "the pretty little woman"—though it published some of her work—while the British magazine *Picture Post* called her "the wife who had died in Spain." In fact, she had apparently turned down Capa's marriage proposal, though she had planned to travel to China with him.

In Taro's work, you see an avant-garde sensibility merging with the tools of the mass media.

Taro came of age in a post–World War I Germany that, freed from censorship, was flooded with newspapers—in the 1920s, Berlin alone boasted a phenomenal forty-seven dailies—plus magazines, journals, tabloids, newsreels and movies, including those made by the Soviets. The illustrated magazines founded during the Weimar period, such as the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* and the *Müchner Illustrierte Presse*, covered everything from natural catastrophes to political issues to fashion; pioneered the use of the photo essay; and would inspire magazines and illustrated newspapers like *Life*, *Picture Post*, *Regards*, *Ce Soir* and *Vu*, all of which would publish Capa's and Taro's photos from Spain. And Berlin had become the central locale for émigré photographers of the avant-garde, such as Lászlò Moholy-Nagy, Martin Munkácsi and Gyorgy Kepes (all, like Capa, from Hungary). The sense of cultural energy—of cultural possibility—was thick; the disdain for popular culture and the mass media held by theorists like Siegfried Kracauer wasn't shared by Weimar's new breed of creative editors, journalists and photographers. On the contrary: they exulted in the new modes of working and the new outlets for their work. Taro was an avid consumer of what Schaber calls "the visual language of modernity"; it is fitting, perhaps, that her first photograph appeared in a fashion magazine.

All this—the merging of an avant-garde sensibility with the tools of the mass media and mass propaganda—is immediately evident in Taro's work. Her pictures look less hurried and more carefully composed than Capa's, and she often shot from odd, dramatic angles. Taro's picture of a Republican militia training on the beach near Barcelona shows five women—most turned away from the camera—and is taken from below, making the women look tall and stark against the cloudless sky. Conversely, "Worker in a munitions factory, Madrid" is photographed from what must have been a balcony above the shop floor. We peer down on a sole worker, surrounded by his steel machines: a lonely, decidedly unfunny version of Chaplin's *Modern Times*. "Three men in the window of the Hotel Colón," taken in August 1936, is an almost perfect symbolic representation of the ways Spain's competing leftist groups clashed and combined. Two young, grinning, handsome men look out from behind a bullet-smashed window, while their even younger, and apparently more serious, comrade leans onto the ledge; voluptuous curtains drape behind him. The caption tells us that this was the Madrid headquarters of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia. But various graffiti have been carved into the cracked, cloudy glass, including "Viva P.C.C."; a hammer and sickle; and UHP ("Proletarian Brothers, Unite!"), a slogan often used by the anarchists.

Taro frequently focused on civilian life: children playing in the rubble of bombed-out buildings, a man getting a haircut, an orphan eating soup. One of her most striking pictures—moving and terrible—was shot in February 1937 and is called "Child refugee from Málaga in Almería, Spain." We see a plump, sleeping toddler surrounded by a striped mattress and a mound of white blankets. The child, whose sex cannot be gleaned from the photograph, wears Mary Janes and what looks like a pajama top over a sweater. White pants are pulled down below the child's knees; the genitals are exposed but blurry: this is an image of unbearable vulnerability. But the shock of this picture, or what Roland Barthes would have called its *punctum*—"that accident," Barthes wrote, "which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)"—are the two perfect, round scabs that adorn the child's chubby knees.

I doubt, however, that much of an argument about a "woman's view" can be deduced from photos such as this (though only Taro photographed a militiawoman wearing high heels); Capa, too, often focused on life behind the lines. This was less an aesthetic or emotional choice than a political one. Taro and Capa wanted the world to see not just what was being destroyed in Spain but also what was being created. They were not only antifascist; they were pro-Republican. (It is this kind of allegiance that, alas, contemporary war photographers often cannot entertain: which side should they have supported in, say, the Liberian civil war?)

Capa and Taro realized, immediately and intuitively, that the Spanish Civil War was a modern war not just in the way it was being reported, photographed and filmed but in the way it was being waged. Bombing campaigns designed to cause massive civilian deaths, especially by Hitler's Condor Legion, were a key tool of the fascists; though it may be hard for us to imagine now, the destruction of civilian centers like Valencia, Madrid and Guernica was truly shocking at the time. (It is true that 1914 had ushered in what Eric Hobsbawm called "the age of massacre"; but it is also true, as Hobsbawm and others have written, that the majority of casualties in World War I were uniformed soldiers.) Documenting civilians as builders, fighters and victims was central to Capa and Taro's project. It was a project avowedly international in intent, geared above all to build interventionist support—whether based on solidarity, anger, fear or shame—in Britain, France and America. One of the Spanish posters in the ICP's vibrant accompanying exhibit called "Other Weapons" captures this well. It shows a photomontage of a dead child with bomber planes flying overhead; its prescient headline simultaneously pleads and threatens: "What Europe

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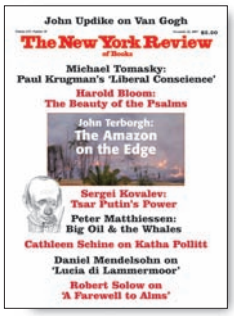

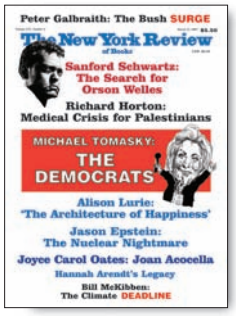

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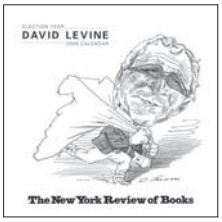

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Tolerates or Protects/What Your Children Can Expect."

Taro's photos, too, were meant to plead, threaten and shock—and they are sometimes gorier and more graphic than Capa's. Her up-close series of air-raid victims in a morgue, shot in Valencia in 1937, shows blackened blood streaming from just-stilled faces onto slabs, sheets and dirty tiled floors. Taro prided herself, also, on photographing soldiers—reading, resting, strategizing, fighting—at the front; the partisan who would become Capa's "Falling Soldier" appears in one of her

CORNELL CAPA/INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Robert Capa, "American soldier killed by German snipers, Leipzig, Germany," 1945

pictures too. And she photographed the training of the new Popular Army, a unified, Communist-dominated force designed to replace the panoply of anarchist-syndicalist militias. (Like most photos of uniformed armies standing in straight rows, hers are not particularly interesting.)

Those improvised militias were a stirring phenomenon, and Capa's famous, immensely moving portraits of them in the early days of the war are suffused with something we can only call love. Still, George Orwell's opposition to the Popular Army in *Homage to Catalonia* was, I think, simply wrong, though the book is now regarded as gospel by much of the American left. The militias *were* a manifestation of spontaneous, revolutionary democracy in action. They were also untrained, underarmed and undisciplined: hardly a match for the forces of Franco, Mussolini and, especially, Hitler. In fact, as the Spanish historian Juan Fusi Aizpùrua wrote in *Heart of Spain*, a book of Capa's photographs from the war, the improvised militias were "disastrous" from a military standpoint. Orwell erred, too, in opposing a popular front that included members of what he called "the capitalist class": for it was just such a front that eventually defeated fascism. (Capa was an ardent popular frontist, going back to his days in Paris.) And then there is Orwell's belief—tragically utopian, in retrospect—that a more radical revolution in Spain might have inspired an uprising, or at least a general strike, by the international proletariat. This was also Lenin's hope, in 1917, for Russia: such dreams die hard.

Like Taro, Capa was killed while documenting war: he died in 1954, at age 40, when he stepped on a land mine in Vietnam. His body of work is, of course, far more extensive than Taro's, and the current exhibit makes no pretense of being comprehensive. "This Is War!"—the title comes from a 1938 *Picture Post* headline heralding Capa's photos—concentrates on the hopeful beginnings of the war in Spain in 1936 and its devastating end in 1938–39; on China in 1938, churning with revolutionary activity as it fought the Japanese invasion; on D-Day; and on Leipzig in the spring of 1945, as the German army collapsed. (Leipzig had been Taro's home, and its liberation held a special significance for Capa.) But even this admittedly narrow focus is, perhaps, narrower than need be. None of Capa's photos from Vietnam, nor from Israel's 1948 War of Independence—which his biographer Alex Kershaw called "Capa's most personal war"—are included. And the exhibit gives the misleading impression that Capa defined "war" primarily in terms of battles, troops, ammunition, bombs, rubble, wounds and death. Many of Capa's most evocative photographs, which document the beauty, grief and everyday heroism of civilian life during wartime, are missing.

Still, the ICP show is full of memorable pictures: the delivery of fat stacks of newspapers to Loyalist soldiers on the Aragon front in 1938; crowds of Chinese men, dressed in Western-style suits and ties, excitedly watching an air battle in Hankou in 1938; bedraggled, pitiful Spanish refugees trudging to the French border as the Republic fell in 1939 (one small, dark-haired girl looking eerily like a young Anne Frank); an American GI kicking a Nazi soldier in Leipzig in 1945, an image that was censored at the time. And then there's the portrait of a serious, wan young man standing before a pen-and-ink portrait of Karl Marx and a banner of Chinese calligraphy. He turns out to be Zhou En-lai at the Communist Party headquarters in Hankou.

The show is good at conveying how exciting—indeed, how revolutionary—Capa's battle photos were. Capa wasn't a witness to war so much as a visual participant in it; he conceived of his photos as intervention, not art. That we, now, consider these photographs to be more than "just news" is due in part to Capa's phenomenal eye. From the beginning of his career, Capa was a genius at capturing the dramatic moment of decision, the seemingly tiny detail that could suggest a much larger world, and the narrative drive that the best pictures encapsulate. Armed with his lightweight Leica and his apparently utter lack of fear, he plunged his viewers into the heart of battle in ways that now seem iconic but at the time were radically new: unsettling, nerve-wracking, terrifying. Capa's photographs were closer, faster, denser than any that had been seen before: these were photographs taken by a partisan in the thick of battle, not an observer of it. The ICP, rightly, showcases some of Capa's pictures as they appeared in magazines and papers: we see how these images zipped around the world, published by everyone from the reactionary Henry Luce in New York to Communist editors in Paris. And regardless of ideological affiliation, such publications weren't shy about touting the sheer drama of Capa's pictures. *Regards*, staunchly left-wing, promised "des documents sensationnels," while *Life* boasted: Life's Camera Gets Closer to Spanish War Than Any Camera Has Ever Got Before.

Capa's photos, especially those from Spain, had a moral and political impact that may be hard for us to conjure, living as we do in a picture-glutted, horror-glutted age. Spain—the way it was documented, the way it was fought, the *why* it was fought—was freighted with meanings, and with a kind of exigent participation, that other wars were not: Capa's viewers weren't simply regarding the pain of others. We approach war photographs with a weird combination of guilty voyeurism, apathy and helplessness; Capa's contemporaries didn't. As the media historian Caroline Brothers has written, "With seemingly everyone from writers to politicians to the Liverpudlian unemployed taking sides over Spain, the civil war took on an unprecedented urgency in the way it was lived and believed in and represented. More than in any previous war and possibly any war since, photographs of Spain became images not just *of* but *in* conflict. And none of them was indifferent."

Capa's audiences for his Spanish Civil War pictures lived just before the avalanche: of history, of images, of mass death. We postmoderns are more cynical than they; and we tend to mistake our weariness for wisdom.

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In 1938 Capa published a book called *Death in the Making*, which he hoped would mobilize international support for the Spanish Republic. He wrote the book and illustrated it with photographs of his own and of Taro's. His dedication read: "For Gerda Taro, who spent one year at the Spanish front, and who stayed on."

Those who stayed on—both the dead and the living—are the subject of Francesc Torres's installation, *Dark Is the Room Where We Sleep*, and his accompanying book. Torres, a conceptual artist whose works often address the confluence of memory, history and politics, co-curated the 2004 Barcelona exhibit "At War," an immense, ambitious show of photographs, paintings and other artifacts that depict modern war as a cultural and social experience. Torres was born in 1948 in Barcelona—"across the street from a brothel," he notes—and is also, I learned in conversation with him, the grandson of a man who spent a decade in jail as a political prisoner of Franco.

Torres's installation documents the excavation, in 2004, of a mass grave near the town of Villamayor de los Montes. (He had previously attempted similar projects in other venues but was always blocked, he says, for political reasons, even by governments of the left.) It was there, on the night of September 14, 1936, that forty-six civilian supporters of the Republic—all male, and ranging in age from 18 to 61—were murdered, execution-style, by fascist paramilitias and then dumped, along with their belongings, into the grave. Torres worked with the excavation team—anthropologists, archaeologists, forensic specialists and members of the Association for the Recuperation of the Historical Memory—as it dug up and painstakingly identified each victim; two years later, the town gathered to give each man a proper burial. Many of the victims' descendants are now older than their relatives were when they were killed. There are brothers on the victims' list, and a father and his sons, and the terrible question emerges: who watched whom die? Torres's work evokes not just the injustice and sudden cruelty of these deaths but how drenched in sorrow they were and are.

The installation includes twenty-nine huge (approximately 6 by 10 feet) matte black-and-white digitally printed photos. The size of the photos is arresting: one's first impression is of slight shock. But the prints, all unframed, are stuck onto the wall with pushpins, as if these are someone's snapshots, though of a particularly sad and grisly kind. We see skulls that look as if they're screaming, and piles of bones. But even more powerful are images of the personal, pro-

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saic things—a comb encrusted with dirt, a pair of eyeglasses—that the victims carried to their death. Torres presents us with just one such item: a watch found on one of the men, which the artist displays carefully, almost reverentially, under glass. It is elegant, and stained, and undeniably beautiful, but it has no hands: time, Torres seems to suggest, was not merely stopped by Franco but actually erased. The excavation, then, is less an attempt to retrieve old memories that have been lost than to create new ones in a place where they had been forbidden. This, at the very least, is what we owe the dead.

"I foolishly insist on winning the Spanish Civil War," Torres's text announces as a visitor enters the installation. It's a statement that made me laugh, though with admiration, at its sheer, counterintuitive audacity. What would it mean to turn such a defeat into its opposite—to create "the negation of the negation," as the Holocaust survivor Jean Améry once wrote?

We start, Torres seems to say, by distinguishing between perpetrators and victims, and with our remembrance of the latter. But this remembrance is of a particularly sober

In Our Orbit

Orwelled

by PETER C. BAKER

The title of *What Orwell Didn't Know* (PublicAffairs, $14.95) suggests a catalog of facts that Orwell overlooked, like how India benefited from British colonization or the upside of constant video surveillance. In fact, most of the book's twenty essays—a significant minority of them by *Nation* contributors—focus on the present-day usefulness of Orwell's brand of vigilant skepticism about language, politics and the media. Orwell, no doubt, would have thanked everyone involved for the attention—and may have even nitpicked about the book's title. *What Orwell Didn't Know*? What? Why not *What Orwell Knew Generally but Not Specifically* or *Conclusions Orwell Might Have Reached but Never Did Because He Died Fifty Years Ago*?

The collection's animating spirit is Orwell's 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language." In it, he argued that corrupt political thought creates and is furthered by sloppy language. Since so much orthodox political communication entails "the defence of the indefensible," politicians and their apologists in the press, the business world and elsewhere regularly rely on "euphemism, question-begging, and sheer cloudy vagueness" to "name things without calling up mental pictures of them." Slogans and ready-made phrases allow and encourage the public to bypass the hard mental work of identifying and judging the often abhorrent details behind vague statements. Orwell noticed that when millions of peasants were "robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry" it was called "transfer of population or rectification of frontiers." Today "rendition" goes down easier than "torture." The public winds up only half-aware of what government is up to and, what's worse, poorly equipped to speak against it. "They will construct your sentences for you," Orwell wrote, "and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself."

The conceit of many of the essays is, basically, were Orwell around today, he would surely deplore X, Y and Z aspects of political language as follows. *Nation* columnist Patricia J. Williams updates Orwell's categories of linguistic deceit. To his "dying metaphors" and "pretentious diction," she adds "the wishful immediate" of "Mission Accomplished"; the "passive explosive" that made the US invasion of Iraq "Saddam's choice"; the "epochal tense" that banishes our national transgressions to the faraway past; and the American vocabulary of God-approved "just deserts." These tools of distortion, she writes, do Big Brother's work individual by individual. In the absence of an actual police state, Americans passively receive a "privatized but global corporate oligarchy whose police power comes wrapped in a sheepish ideology of laissez-faire, sanctified as God's will." It's doubtful these conclusions will surprise liberal readers of Orwell (or of this magazine), but Williams's rhetorical elegance and vigilant ear for trickery are their own rewards.

Other essays discuss how the self-disguising narratives of power like those Williams describes are transmitted and promoted. *Nation* publisher emeritus Victor Navasky argues that, absent explicit totalitarianism, homogenous and market-hungry Big Media plays a significant role in disseminating orthodox dishonesties. The quantity of like information put out by conglomerates discourages critical thinking and dissent, and those giants further squeeze the market by lobbying for increased postal rates for small, independent journals of opinion (as those who have been following the Great Postal Crisis of 2007 know all too much about).

Navasky doesn't specify what makes the independent press more resistant than media conglomerates to Orwellian obfuscation, or why "historically, the best journals of opinion have functioned as voices of dissent" and "Big Media functions to inculcate, disseminate, and propagate (often by mere assumption) the dominant orthodoxy." For such arguments, you will have to read his *A Matter of Opinion* or Ben Bagdikian's *The Media Monopoly* (which Navasky cites approvingly). Within *What Orwell Didn't Know*, turn to Martin Kaplan's "Welcome to the Infotainment Freak Show" for an examination of how the news has been corrupted by business models borrowed from entertainment.

In "Our Own Thought Police," Michael Massing agrees with Navasky and Kaplan that corporate media do a poor job of informing and encouraging honest democratic debate. He insists, however, that the media underreport on, say, the routinely disturbing conduct of US soldiers abroad because Americans don't want to hear about it. When such stories make the news, people get either pissed off or bored, then change the channel or turn the page—or call the station in a huff, demanding that this anti-Americanism be taken off the air. "The public," Massing writes, "has become its own collective Ministry of Truth."

It's a provocative claim, particularly since counterexamples of honest reporting and direct analysis abound even in decidedly mainstream sources. But one need only consider the astounding endurance of public support for George W. Bush and his invasion of Iraq long after its pretexts were debunked to see that Massing isn't just being a doctrinaire pessimist or snob. If good political language is to make a difference, people must be willing to process it. It is worth knowing whether they are—and if not, how they someday might be. ■

Peter C. Baker, a freelance writer in New York, is a fall 2007 intern at The Nation.

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kind. It has nothing to do with glorious warriors who died unvanquished, or with exultant martyrs making a beeline for heaven, or with false promises of "Never Again!" *Dark Is the Room Where We Sleep* is quieter, humbler, than all that; and bleaker, too, for it rejects both consolation and revenge. It is constructed in praise not of famous men but, rather, of the ordinary ones—and their descendants—who had a vision of a better, more capacious, more human Spain, and whose cries for international solidarity went largely unheard.

I think—though who can be sure?—that Taro and Capa would have shared Torres's vision had they lived long enough to see a democratic Spain. For to look at their work—so long ago, and yet so very recent—is to see the citizens of Villamayor de los Montes: then and now, dead and living, forgotten and honored, betrayed and hopeful, vanquished and free. It is to see those who perished, and those who persevered. ■

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Dreamlife Without Angels

by ANGE MLINKO

Notes From the Air
Selected Later Poems.
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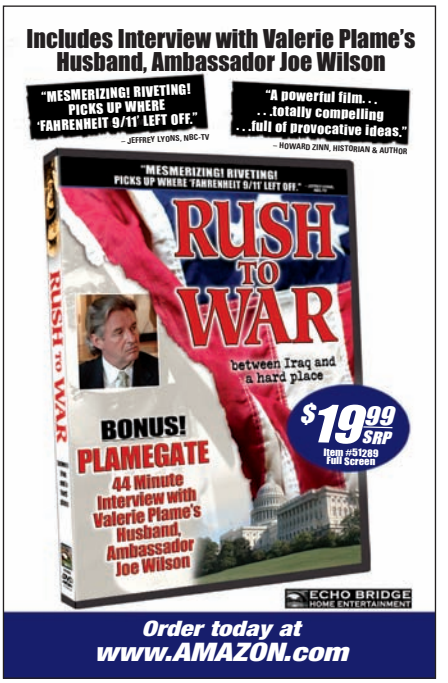
Every year that the Nobel committee passes over poet John Ashbery for a socially responsible novelist, it proves that the prize for literature is just an arm of the Peace Prize, rather than—like the Nobels for physics or chemistry—a prize for radical discovery in the field. With the publication this fall of *Notes From the Air*, readers can follow the development of the latter half of a career that has gone from imaginative discovery to discovery like a geometer unveiling the properties of a world, now with this axiom added, that axiom suppressed. From "The Phantom Agents":

> We need more data re our example,
> earth—how it would behave in a
> crisis, under pressure,
> or simply on a day no one had staked
> out for unrest
> to erupt. What season would fit its
> lifestyle
> most naturally? Who would the
> observers, the control group be?

When *The Mooring of Starting Out: The First Five Books of Poetry* was published ten years ago in honor of Ashbery's seventieth birthday, who would have guessed that to honor his eightieth we would be treated to a tome of later work that would be almost exactly as thick? *Notes From the Air* draws from ten books published between 1987 and 2005. It's not easy to keep up with this output, especially if you're among those who fetishize Ashbery's legendary early work. *The Mooring of Starting Out* retraced the path blazed from his first book, *Some Trees* (chosen by W.H. Auden for the Yale Younger Poets Prize in 1956), through the disjunctive *Tennis Court Oath* (1962), *Rivers and Mountains* (1966) and *The Double Dream of Spring* (1970) up to *Three Poems* (1972), which many consider his greatest work (it is in prose). Beyond that horizon lay the marvelous but comparatively conservative *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1975), which would win him the Triple Crown of poetry: the Pulitzer, the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award.

One defining quality has remained consistent through the decades: Ashbery's utter refusal to treat the self as a knowable entity with fixed psychological coordinates. (There's also a corollary that applies to versification

Ange Mlinko's poems and articles have appeared in the Village Voice, The Nation *and* Poetry. *Her latest book of poems is* Starred Wire.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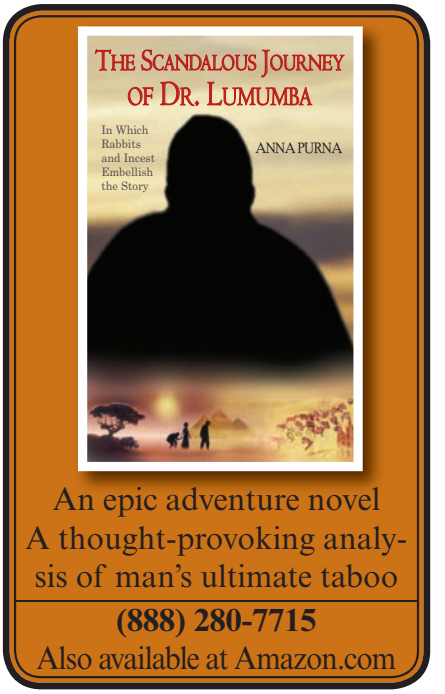
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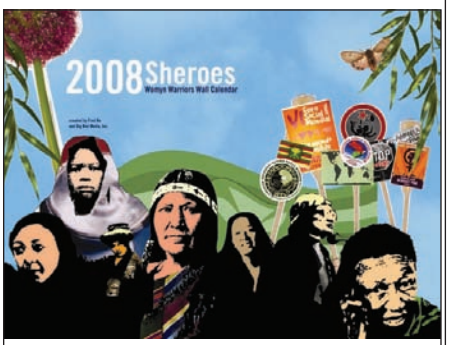

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itself: he refuses to treat the poem as a definable entity with fixed formal coordinates. While committed to unmetrical, free-form stanzas and even unlineated poetry, he can toss off a double sestina or pages of rhymed quatrains. His dexterity renders moot poetry's internecine battles over prosody.) He doesn't write poems about mom and dad, his homosexuality, life's watershed events. In his rejection of the confessional, therapeutic, the sociological and the overtly political, his example serves as a rebuke to all instrumental uses of poetry. The Ashbery poem isn't grounded in reportage or fact. And that is at least one of his great discoveries, if not his greatest: the ideal poetry for the Information Age is a poetry of no information.

Oh, the irony that this white male preserves the privilege of impersonal universality under the sign of the avant-garde! Yet this is not exactly Eliot's impersonality or Kant's universality. Rather, it seems collaged from the dreamlife of modern American culture; as the fine writing of *Rivers and Mountains* or *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* gave way to this later style, Ashbery wielded the American demotic, well, like the daemonic: "We used to call it the boob tube,/but I guess they don't use tubes anymore./Whatever," he writes in "Composition." *Notes From the Air* consolidates this development. It takes its title from a poem that begins thus:

> A yak is a prehistoric cabbage: of that,
> at least, we may be sure.
> But tell us, sages of the solarium, why
> is that light
> still hidden back there, among house-
> plants and rubber sponges?
> For surely the blessed moment
> arrived at midday

It isn't hard to see why, last August, MtvU crowned the octogenarian its first poet laureate. Ashbery can yak. He can apostrophize. He can mock. He can ode and odelay in the same line. His jump-cuts anticipate the music videos that MTV pioneered, and wasn't the first book to mark his late style, *April Galleons* (1987), published a mere six years after the channel's debut?

For all the doubts that Ashbery's recent prodigious output equals his early achievement, this poetry of America's dreamlife, of eruptions and interruptions and daemonic demotic, has come to signify what poetry is in its pure state. The new benchmark for poetry becomes not formal innovation on a par with the fragments and erasures of *The Tennis Court Oath*, or the Parnassian purity of the ekphrastic meditation "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror," but fulfillment of the stringent demands of its own oneirism. It insists on utter autonomy. This is harder than it looks. The pressure to express oneself surely comes from within as without (so many people mistake self-expression for poetry that they can't recognize any other kind). But within the constraints Ashbery sets for himself, there is infinite variety. Take, for instance, his miniature narratives, which lovingly parody romances, travelogues, biographies. From "Memories of Imperialism":

> Dewey took Manila
> and soon after invented the decimal
> system
> that keeps libraries from collapsing
> even unto this day.
> A lot of mothers immediately
> started naming their male offspring
> "Dewey,"
> which made him queasy. He was
> already having second thoughts
> about imperialism.
> In his dreams he saw library books
> with milky numbers
> on their spines floating in Manila
> Bay.

Or take these lines from "…by an Earthquake":

> A hears by chance a familiar name,
> and the name involves a riddle of
> the past.
> B, in love with A, receives an unsigned
> letter in which the writer states
> that she is the mistress of A and
> begs B not to take him away from
> her.
> B, compelled by circumstances to be
> a companion of A in an isolated
> place, alters her rosy views of love
> and marriage when she discovers,
> through A, the selfishness of men.

"Interesting People of Newfoundland," from *Where Shall I Wander* (2005), is already practically a chestnut:

> Newfoundland is, or was, full of
> interesting people.
> Like Larry, who would make a fool
> of himself on street corners for a
> nickel.…
> Doc Hanks, the sawbones, was a real
> good surgeon
> when he wasn't completely drunk,
> which was most of the time.
> When only half drunk he could
> perform decent cranial surgery.
> There was the blind man who never
> said anything
> but produced spectral sounds on a
> musical saw.

The one way Ashbery's poems may always be fruitfully read is as sheer ear candy. Just

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glancing through his titles will confirm this (my favorite: "Yes, Dr. Grenzmer, How May I Be of Assistance to You? What! You Say the Patient Has Escaped?"). Yet where literature is concerned, we're ardent believers in the instrumental: how else to explain why the poorest art in the world, with the least influence on American culture, is routinely made the scapegoat of all art's sins? Rock and roll halts no wars; therefore let us stone poets, goes the logic. Meanwhile, the fact that visual artists become millionaires in an art market fueled by a hedge-fund bubble fazes no one.

Caution: Ear candy may segue shockingly into the sublime, as in these lines from "Chinese Whispers":

> The trees, the barren trees, have
> been described more than once.
> Always they are taller, it seems,
> and the river passes them
> without noticing. We, too, are taller,
> our ceilings higher, our walls more
> tinctured
> with telling frescoes, our dooryards
> both airier and vaguer,
> according as time passes and weaves
> its minute deceptions in and out,
> a secret thread.
> Peace is a full stop.
> And though we had some chance of
> slipping past the blockade,
> now only time will consent to have
> anything to do with us,
> for what purposes we do not know.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge termed poetic faith "that willing suspension of disbelief," but little did he know it would become an existential stance toward not literature but life. That is, the laws of fiction are now no more fantastic than what we know of the latest findings of string theory or forensic science. Ashbery's intuition that this has become our default spirituality drives these miniature novellas with their disjunctive comedies. They erupt frequently into acknowledgments of our condition: lonesome souls in an absurd, tragicomic cosmos, where we know not whence we come nor whither we go.

This darker Ashbery is kept somewhat under wraps in *Notes From the Air*, lest the psychologism of the disappointed romantic sully the purity of the pleasure of the text. Missing from *Notes From the Air* is the enchanting "Poem at the New Year" from *Hotel Lautréamont* (1992). Its narrator recounts a moment when he wished that time would "suspend its flight": "We went out and saw that it had actually happened." The poem has a nostalgic bittersweetness that recalls Joseph Cornell's shadow boxes, which of course echo in the title of the book (the Francophilic Cornell made several "Hotels"). If Cornell's boxes are microcosms of the white wooden windowsills—nails jutting out and painted over—of the kind of Victorian house he spent his childhood in (in Nyack), poems like "Poem at the New Year" are haunted by a similar sense of time out of mind. Raised near Rochester, New York, Ashbery has spent his later years shuttling between Manhattan and Hudson. Cornell would have felt at home in Ashbery's upstate antique-filled Victorian.

Another magician of childhood themes, more shadowy yet, inspired the book-length poem *Girls on the Run* (1999): outsider artist Henry Darger. As Ashbery had lost a younger brother in early childhood, so Darger lost a younger sister; as Ashbery grew into the most prolific, imaginative poet of his generation, so Darger spent his life composing his 15,145-page, illustrated epic, *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What Is Known As the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion*. The excerpt in *Notes From the Air* gives a taste of *Girls on the Run*, its novelistic figures and apocalyptic mood:

> A great plane flew across the sun,
> and the girls ran along the ground.
> The sun shone on Mr. McPlaster's
> face, it was green like an elephant's.
>
> Let's get out of here, Judy said.
> They're getting closer, I can't stand it.

Almost five years into a distant, hallucinogenic war halfway around the world, what American could fail to read at least some prognostic dread in the dislocated saga of children caught up in intermittent war:

> I awoke from the dream. A big boom
> was passing over my head. I could see
> clear up the mizzen, if that counts,
> anymore, your honor, I just want to
> say I respects
> all what is good, and don't come here
> any more, I won't.

If you're going to read one Ashbery book from the past twenty years (aside from *Notes From the Air*), it should be *Girls on the Run*. If you think Ashbery "writes about nothing," *Girls on the Run* is for you. Decades after being lambasted (in this magazine, in 1967) for not writing protest poems in the Vietnam era, Ashbery finally gave us his war poem. The world barely noticed:

> "All aboard! If there's one thing I hate
> it's a loner,"
> Uncle Philip said, or someone who's
> beside himself. Please, Uncle,
> can't we go out today? Aw, shut up,

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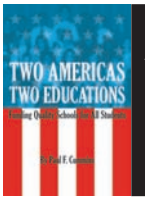

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Events

CALIFORNIA

National Days of Solidarity With Venezuela

■ Talk about how to build socialism: Peace and Freedom Party, a socialist party on the ballot in California presents the National Days of Solidarity With Venezuela forum. December 3, Niebyl-Proctor Marxist Library, 6501 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland. www.ushov.org/content/view/87/. Info: (510) 595-7417, fax (510) 595-7748 or e-mail npml@marxistlibr.org. We look at the critiques, the advances, the conflicts and the contradictions that are part of building socialism, in this case, in Venezuela, where the subjects are highlighted as the effort continues. We encourage you to plan a similar discussion wherever you are. Norma Harrison, (866) 264-9029 or normaha@pacbell.net.

NEW YORK

Tribes: The Mind in Freedom

■ Beginning December 13: "The Mind in Freedom," an exhibition of paintings by Taiwanese Buddhist master Lee Sun Don. Also, *A Gathering of the Tribes* magazine available through the gallery and its website. A Gathering of the Tribes, 285 East 3rd Street, New York, NY 10009. Call (212) 674-3778, fax (212) 674-5576, visit www.tribes.org or e-mail info@tribes.org. Sunday–Saturday, 12 to 6 PM or by appointment.

Randall Caroline Watson Forsberg Memorial

■ Memorial service for Randall Caroline Watson Forsberg, PhD. Peace activist, arms control expert and scholar. At 1 PM, December 1, at the Great Hall in Shepard Hall, City College of New York, 138th Street and Convent Avenue.

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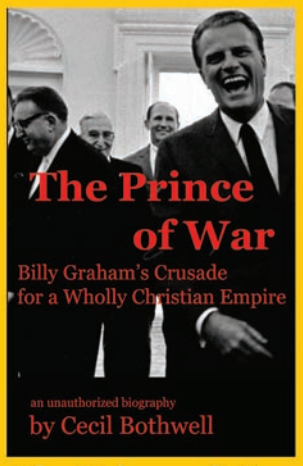
... the rest of the story



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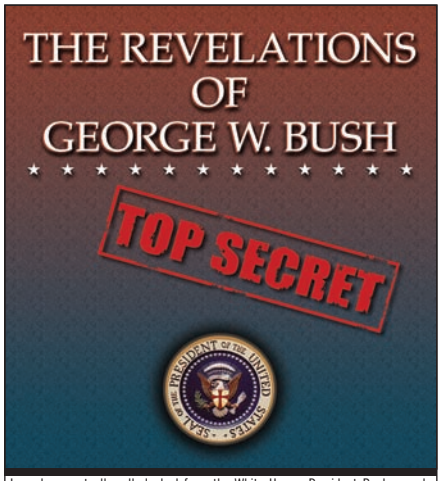

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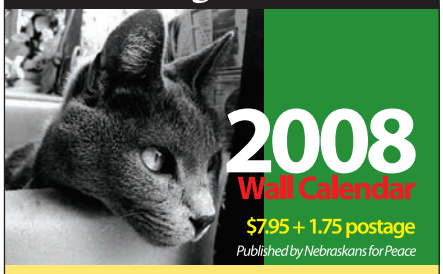

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Philip said. Now there were two
bald uncles
who lived in the nearby swamp. One
of them knew Shuffle. And he said:
If it's to play in, why not. But if it's
just to play over and around
then I don't see why you need to, and
indeed shall expend every effort
to see that you don't.

Just so, much of Anglophone poetry seems unmoved by the changes Ashbery has made to our ways of hearing and imagining. It is much easier to represent the metamorphoses of the last century as cultural paradigm shifts (feminism, multiculturalism, confessionalism, Marxism) or to toss in references to e-mail and iPods. What's it like to belong to the vast impersonal world in which airwaves bring information more real and more abstract than the ether and angels of old? As a discredited theory of space, ether at least had spiritual solace. I doubt many readers of this magazine shed tears for the death of God, but what do poets do in the absence of transcendent belief? Our justification for an art neither popular nor remunerative depends on a wager something like Pascal's: why not bet on one life to gain two?

Ashbery has made this wager, and the consequences are damning for those of us who should have moved on, who should have succumbed by now to the cheerful utilitarianism that capitalism and technology promise us. The promise Ashbery holds out to us is this: literature keeps setting the bar for our dreams not higher, but elsewhere. From "Sleepers Awake":

Cervantes was asleep when he wrote
Don Quixote.
Joyce slept during the Wandering
Rocks section of *Ulysses*.
Homer nodded and occasionally
slept during the greater part of the
Iliad; he was awake however when
he wrote the *Odyssey*.
Proust snored his way through *The*
Captive, as have legions of his
readers after him.
Melville was asleep at the wheel for
much of *Moby-Dick*.
Fitzgerald slept through *Tender Is*
the Night, which is perhaps not so
surprising,
but the fact that Mann slumbered on
the very slopes of *The Magic*
Mountain is quite extraordinary—
that he wrote it, even more so.

This then is what aesthetic discovery consists of, what it looks like, what it's for: thanks to Ashbery, we see there's more in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in your sociology. ■

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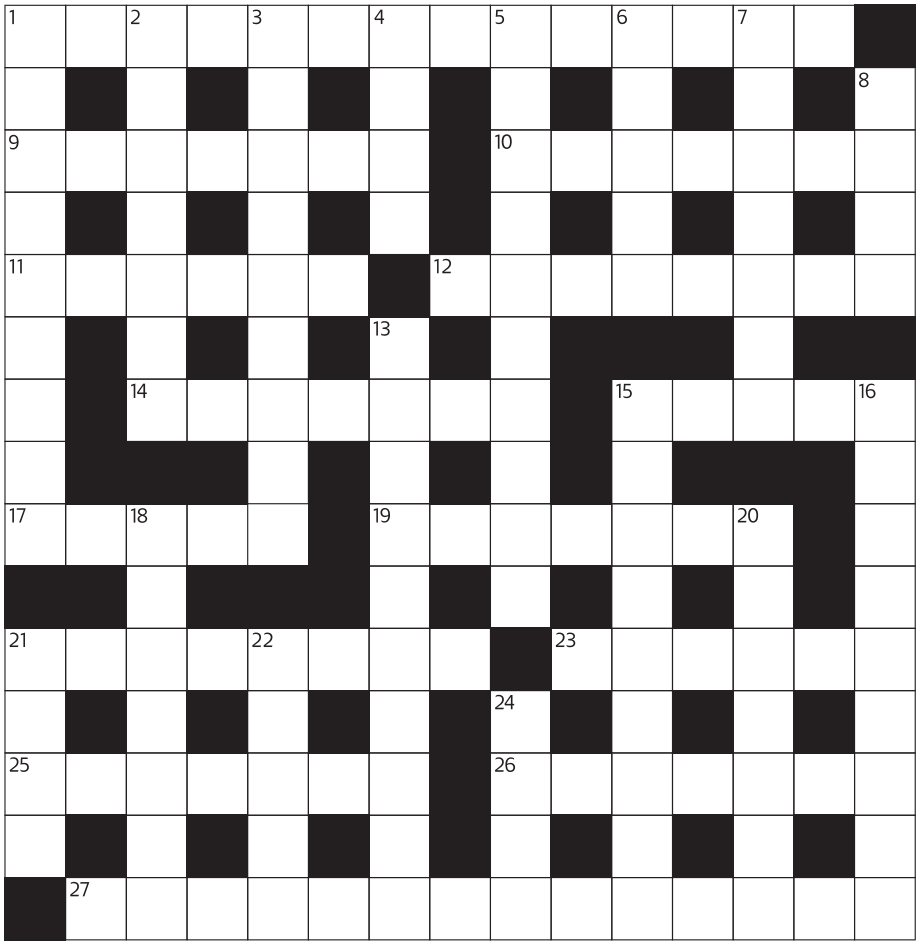

ACROSS

1 Prettying up the old sweetheart to a T, if I end up with not quite correct action. (14)

9 Part of the song that shows the little umpire has an outpouring of it. (7)

10 It might make a kind of cake, but poor Elsie has to act backward about it. (7)

11 In the center of things, the awkward maid has a short way to show it. (6)

12 Supposedly one came down like a wolf on the fold, like one from Aleppo, today. (8)

14 One who lets children get away with things means the end of the tulip and a wild rose get involved. (7)

15 An intolerant sort with a small portion to move inside. (5)

17 Be the best, according to what one hears in couple of letters. (5)

19 Create havoc around the capital of Latvia—it's what Alice and anyone else would call sweet. (7)

21 Sort of flit with tunes around it, which brought food to the needy. (8)

23 Proving an auto goes well in Paris, but one doesn't like it in the motor. (6)

25 Quit with me inside, being changed for the better. (7)

26 Made a profit, showing the letters in an article are dreadful! (7)

27 Our government disavows any attempt at such, but a couple of silly types show the result is about this magazine. (14)

DOWN

1 With no clothes on, sing a holiday song inside, though it's more of a boating song. (9)

2 A very loud beginning to tunes, which come with slightly illicit romances. (7)

3 To take short notice with pillages coming up might show where Alice saw a sitter. (9)

4, 21 and **6** Supply the money, with the last word to count in a basic way. (13)

5 Mad-dog variety coming from more than one species? (10)

6 See 4

7 Sesame might have helped make it. (Playwrights love such a night!) (7)

8 Badly need an old garden? (4)

13 A map of the area is around a sort of "duet," according to what might be said by everyone. (10)

15 Place where a book in German gets a nod. (9)

16 A sliced up nude torso sounds awful, but it's really just a tender steak. (9)

18 People like the Man From Plains have to lug a lot of things around. (7)

20 Things don't come in easily with this put on, which brings me up to the "watering hole" just to take leave from it. (7)

21 See 4

22 The state of a literary passage, in help coming up with it. (5)

24 Go over the lines, with the point able to be made. (4)

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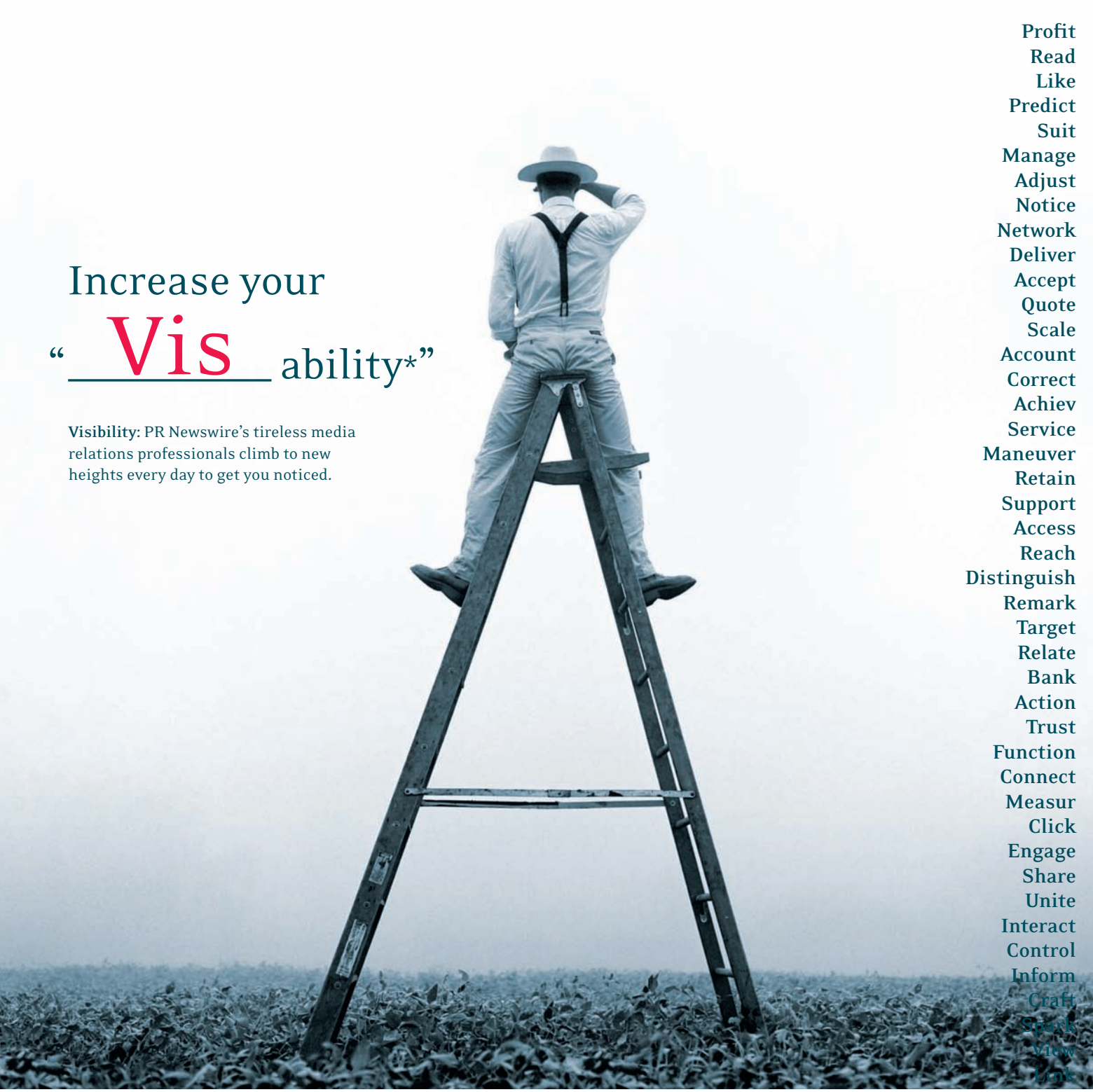

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